

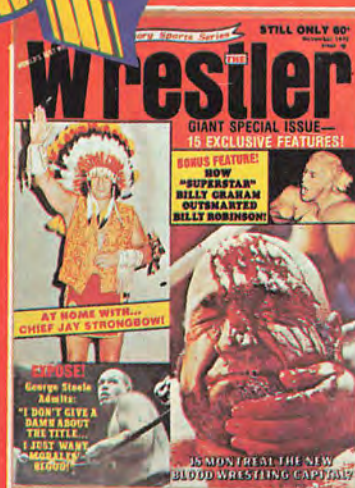
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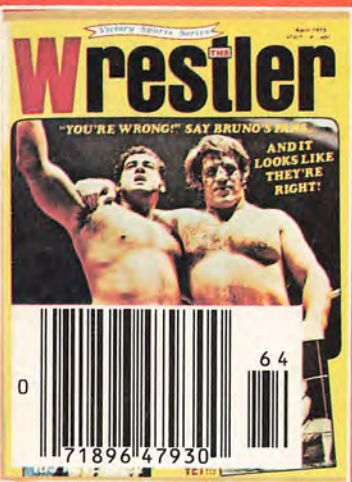
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WINTER 1976

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WHEN BRUISER BROKE
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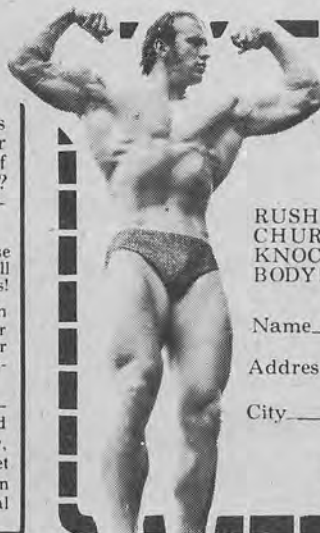
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THE BEST OF THE **Wrestler**

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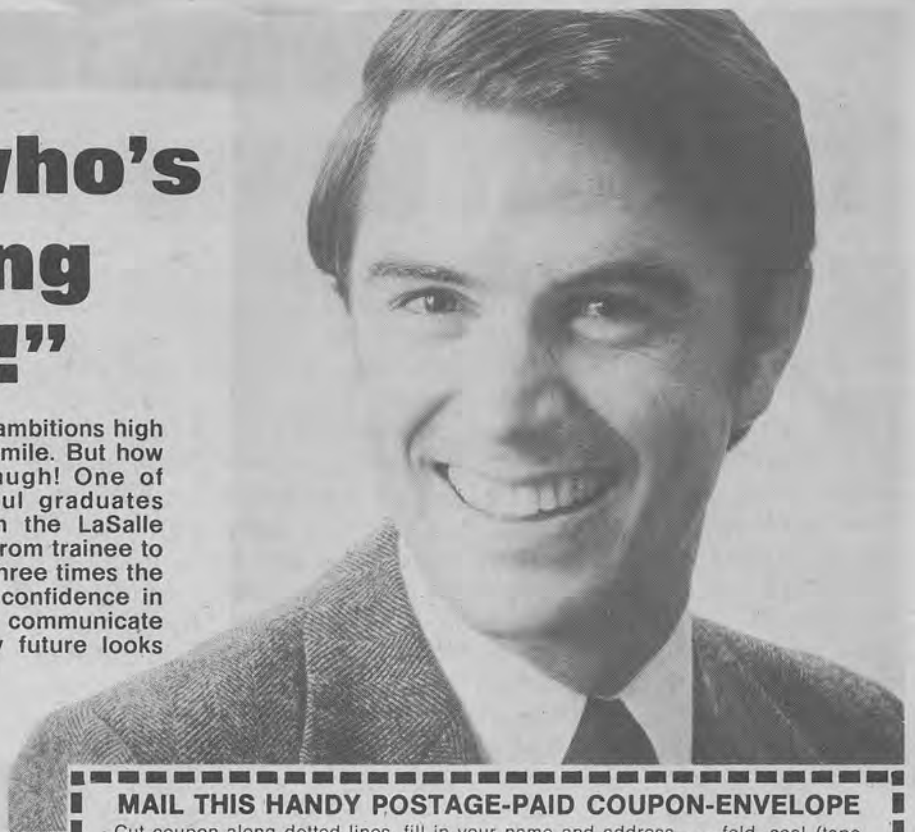
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INTRODUCTION

THE BEST OF THE WRESTLER

IT IS TIME once again to look back at the great events in wrestling through the stories which helped make them famous. We've gone to the files of THE WRESTLER and chosen the top stories about the best wrestlers during their greatest moments. If you enjoy reading it half as much as we've enjoyed compiling it, you're in for a rare treat indeed.

The first story in this collection is fittingly a first. **"See, That's My Boy There . . . And the Guy On The Floor? That's Lou Thesz!"** recounts the first

time Dory Funk Jr. tried for the world's championship. You'll thrill to the 20-year-old's attempt to unseat one of the great champions of all time, as reported in October 1967. It's no wonder Dory would someday be a great title king in his own right.

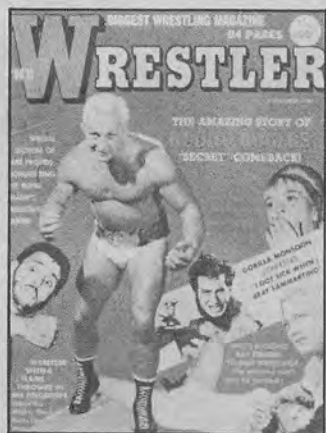
You may find it a little hard to hold back the tears when you read **"The Day They Buried Cowboy Ellis' Famous Hat."** It's told by the then president of his fan club and has been justly famous throughout the years for its insight and compassion. It makes one realize how humane

Ellis can be. It is also the reason the January 1969 issue of THE WRESTLER is such a valuable collector's item.

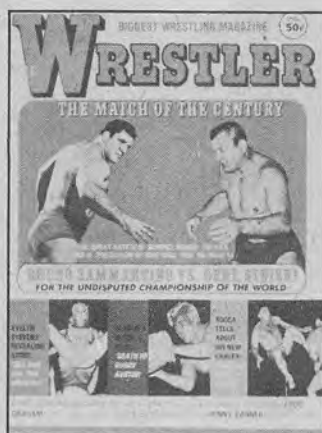
"A Rookie Remembers His First Main Event" captures all the excitement of a young athlete's first step to success. Scott Casey's fascinating recollection first appeared in October 1973. It remains one of the most insightful looks into a wrestler's mind ever written.

The funny but plaintive story dealing with Ivan Kalmikoff's plea, **"Does Anybody Out**

(Continued on page 54)



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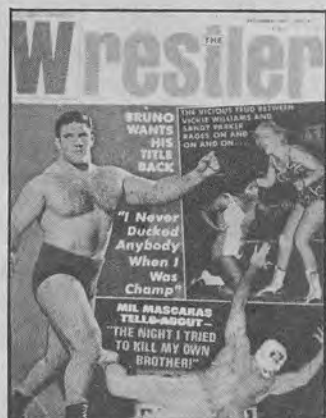
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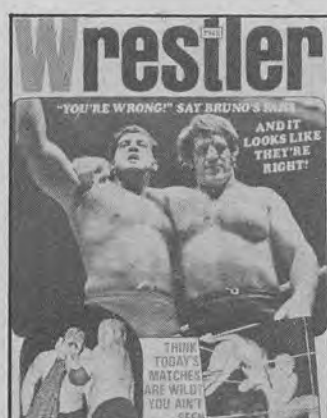
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**'SEE!
THAT'S
MY BOY THERE
...AND THE GUY
ON THE FLOOR?
THAT'S LOU THESZ!'**



IT STINKS," grunted the man in the ringside seat as he watched the principals in the main event slip through the ropes.

Most people in the Albuquerque, N.M., arena agreed. Throwing a green kid like Dory Funk Jr. into the ring with one of the greatest wrestlers who ever lived, Lou Thesz, just doesn't make sense to sportsman-like U.S. mat fans. It's like throwing a trout into a tank with a hungry shark. That's not sport. It's bloody murder!

But the one man in that arena who should have been concerned most of all wasn't worried in the least. In fact he was grinning from ear to ear, clapping his big hands together and chanting in a voice filled with confidence, "Go, boy, Go!"

Dory Funk Sr., who is as old as Thesz and equally as famous, massaged his son's wide shoulders. "Get to his legs and he'll fall apart all at once, like a house of cards," he told his son.

The kid smiled. "Okay, Dad. I know how to handle Thesz. After all, I have the best teacher in the world. You!"

The father, never known for his modesty, dug a playful jab into

(Continued on page 10)

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(Continued from Page 8)

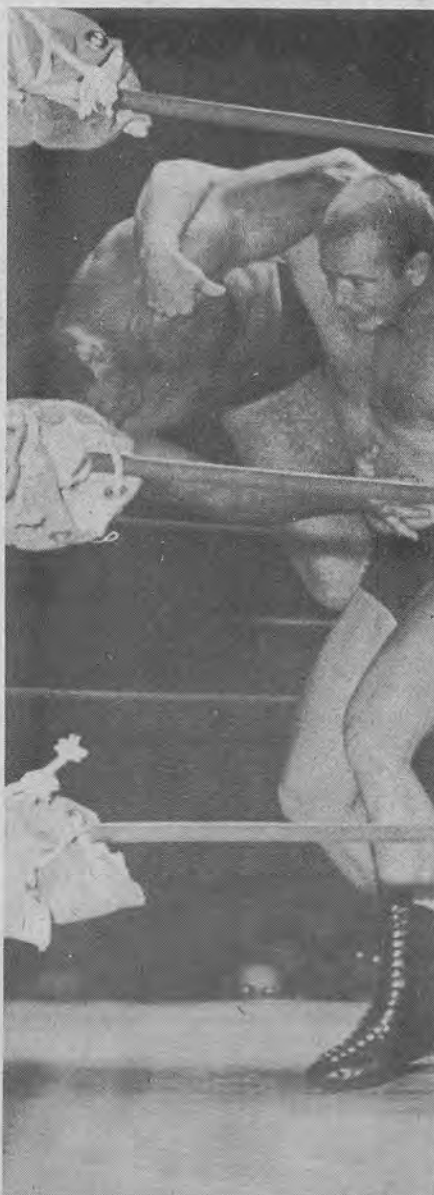
young Dory's ribs. "You're damned right you do!"

While the fans couldn't understand how any promoter could endorse what they considered a gross mismatch, they would have felt more at ease had they known that it was Dory Sr. himself who had arranged the whole thing.

Senior told a reporter a few hours before the match, "Nobody has to tell me how tough Thesz is. I ought to know. I must have wrestled him at least a hundred times over the years. Sure he's tough. But he's also slowed down a lot in the last couple of years. And his legs . . . his legs can't carry him through a fast half-hour match. The way I figure it, a youngster, by beating Lou now, can cash in on the Old Man's reputation. And if there's any cashing in to be done, let it be my son who gets the benefit."

Junior did get the benefit. Not as much as his father had hoped, true. But more than enough for a young wrestler. Thesz was not flattened. He didn't win either, and he didn't lose. He came away with a draw, and was lucky to get it, for his fired-up foe had him on the verge of defeat three times during the torrid 60-minute bout.

Twice he saved himself by sticking his finger into Dory's eye, forcing the



Former world champion Lou Thesz whips across ring as young Dory Funk sets to follow up his advantage. Below: Thesz is crashed head first into ring post.

youngster to release his hold. Those in the audience who had been fans of the Grand Old Man for over two decades couldn't believe what they had seen. Thesz fouling? Never! But it was true.

Following his father's orders, Junior centered his sizzling attack on Lou's ancient legs. He used Japanese leglocks, Figure-Four leglocks, Stepover toeholds, Spinning leglocks. And once, he even tried old Frank Gotch's famous toehold.

Before the bout was 15 minutes old, Thesz could hardly stand up. But nobody beats Thesz with things like leglocks and toeholds. You've got to knock this proud old former champion unconscious. He'll never quit, and pinning him is just about impossible, even today, when he's 50 years old.

The two Funks together couldn't make Thesz quit, and we doubt that they could pin him. So the draw Junior got against Lou Thesz in Albuquerque must remain a great moral victory—probably the most significant one he'll ever have even if he manages to stay in one piece as long as the immortal Lou Thesz. And it is easy to understand why there was such enormous pride in Dory Senior's voice when he yelled out for all to hear:

"See! That's My Boy There!" □

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"Most people sit around hoping for more money. I can show you how to go in and get the raise you want now. I personally guarantee it!"

a whole new system for getting raises. A system that is so incredibly **dynamic** it instantly put me on the map with all of the people I worked for. The rest is history.

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Now, at the age of thirty-three, I am a major stockholder and vice-president with one of America's largest and best-known communications corporations. I have several hundred thousand dollars in blue-chip investments and own a stable of fine cars including the beautiful antique Rolls Royce you see above.

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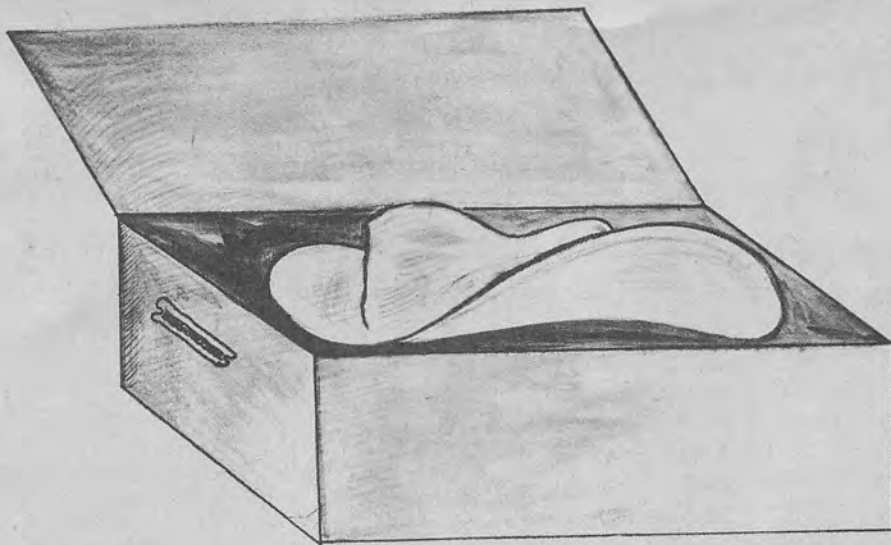
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THE DAY THEY BURIED COWBOY ELLIS' FAMOUS HAT

A heart-tugging true story about a little-known side of the popular wrestler, as told by the president of his 4,000-member fan club

LET'S JUST call him "Johnny." That wasn't his real name, but it doesn't make any difference to this story. What counts is what happened to Johnny one day when he was wasting away with cancer.

His face pale and drawn, Johnny was lying in bed thinking of all the happy things that boys do and wondering, with hope and exultation in his heart,

if he'd ever get to do them again.

Once he had thrilled to the click of bat against ball, the clatter of a diving board under his feet, the stirring music of a traveling circus troupe, the taste of a chocolate ice cream cone covered with sprinkles. . .

But most of all, he loved to watch wrestling matches and he would go wild with excitement

when he saw his hero Cowboy Bob Ellis in action on the television screen, bulldogging a vicious opponent to the mat.

Now, this was all he had left for enjoyment. It would have been enough if it weren't for his illness. Johnny, who was only 10 years old, was puzzled by his illness. He was scared, too, though he tried not to show it.

The doctors who came to

visit him didn't help much. They examined him with great solemnity, patted him on the head, held whispered consultations with his mother and then left, shaking their heads.

Johnny's mother knew he didn't have long to live and she wanted to do anything she could to make him happy. So one day she got in touch with Cowboy Ellis, told him about her son and ended with the plea:

"Can you come over and see him? I can't tell you how much that would mean to him."

"I'd consider it a privilege, ma'am," Bob said in his soft Texas drawl.

Coming from most other people, this would have sounded stiff and formal. But Ellis, who has a big spot in his heart for kids, was genuinely sincere.

When Ellis showed up in Johnny's home—his huge, muscular frame filling the bedroom doorway — Johnny's eyes popped with disbelief. He struggled upright, reached out a hand and tried to speak.

"Now, don't get excited," his mother said. Turning to Bob, she pointed to her throat and explained: "Johnny can't speak . . . he's got a growth in his throat."

Ellis and his son, Bob, Jr., in trophy room at the Ellis ranch in Texas. Bronzed hat on mantel is the one he wore the night he beat Buddy Rogers in New York. Bob's fans had the hat bronzed and presented it to him as a tribute.



Flashing a big grin, Ellis shook hands with the boy, pulled up a chair and started talking to him. He talked about many things, about patience and hope and courage. And then he entertained the boy with stories about his wrestling career.

Just before the visit ended, Bob gave Johnny his big cowboy hat as a memento. The kid's eyes were shining with happiness when Ellis left.

It is typical of Cowboy Ellis that he doesn't like to talk about such incidents. He has brought cheer into the lives of many kids, and grownups, too—mostly those confined to homes or hospitals—and he has done it not for show or publicity

but out of a deep compassion for people.

Johnny's case was an especially poignant one. Not longer after his visit, Bob received a letter from Lafayette, Ind. It was from the boy's mother. After telling him the news about her son's death, she thanked Bob for the "wonderful thing" he had done and said Johnny had died happy with the memory of having met his hero in person. Then she wrote: "We buried your hat with the poor child because it meant so much to him."

Ellis was grieved by her loss. "I just hope," he later told a friend, "that I gave Johnny a reason to smile when he had nothing to smile about."

Cowboy Bob Ellis' visit to a dying boy reflects a side of him that very few people know about. There are many other sides. One of them, his love for horses, stems from his childhood days on a Texas ranch. Today, Bob is an accomplished horseman who spends considerable time breeding, training and racing thoroughbreds.

This is not an easy job for a traveling man. Bob clocks about 100,000 miles a year to keep wrestling engagements. Judging by the tons of fan mail he receives, he would have to travel at least another 500,000 miles to please everybody who wants to see him in action.

When he is at his winter home in Phoenix, Ariz., he trains and races his horses at the beautiful Turf Paradise track, often jogging around the track himself a couple of times to keep in peak condition.

Cowboy is as popular in the West as he is in the Midwest, which he tours during the summer months. Wherever possible, he picks his stops with an eye to their proximity to a race-track.

Inveterate track fans are familiar with Bob's fine stable of thoroughbreds, among them *Greek Jewel*, *Subjugator*, *Speed Trail* and a mare with a name that many of his opponents know the meaning of first-hand, *Counted Out*.

Bob always tries to take a couple of horses with him when he invades a new territory. Win or lose, the horses get the best of care. Bob treats them so well, in fact, that other horse owners often ask him to train *their* thoroughbreds.

The core of Ellis' non-wrestling empire is, of course, his Square-Circle Ranch in his native town of San Angelo, Texas, where he also breeds and raises quarter horses and has developed an enviable reputation for raising some of the country's finest sheep and cattle.

A remarkable man, this Cowboy Ellis. Aside from all these accomplishments, he has won more wrestling trophies than he has room for—and he has plenty of room in his spacious Circle-Square Ranch house.

On top of this, he has a B.S. in physical education from McMurry College in Abilene, Texas. He pilots his own plane. And, before he went into wrestling, he played pro football with the Philadelphia Eagles. His biggest ambition today is to develop a racehorse capable of winning the Kentucky Derby.

We hope he realizes his ambition. When I say "we," I mean



the 4,000 enthusiastic members of his fan club, myself included.

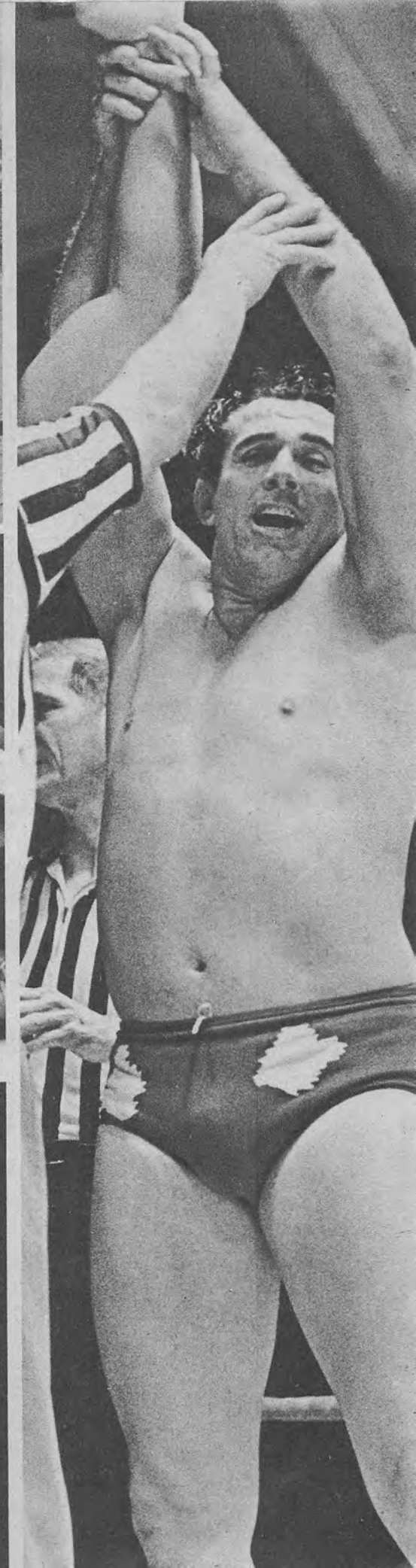
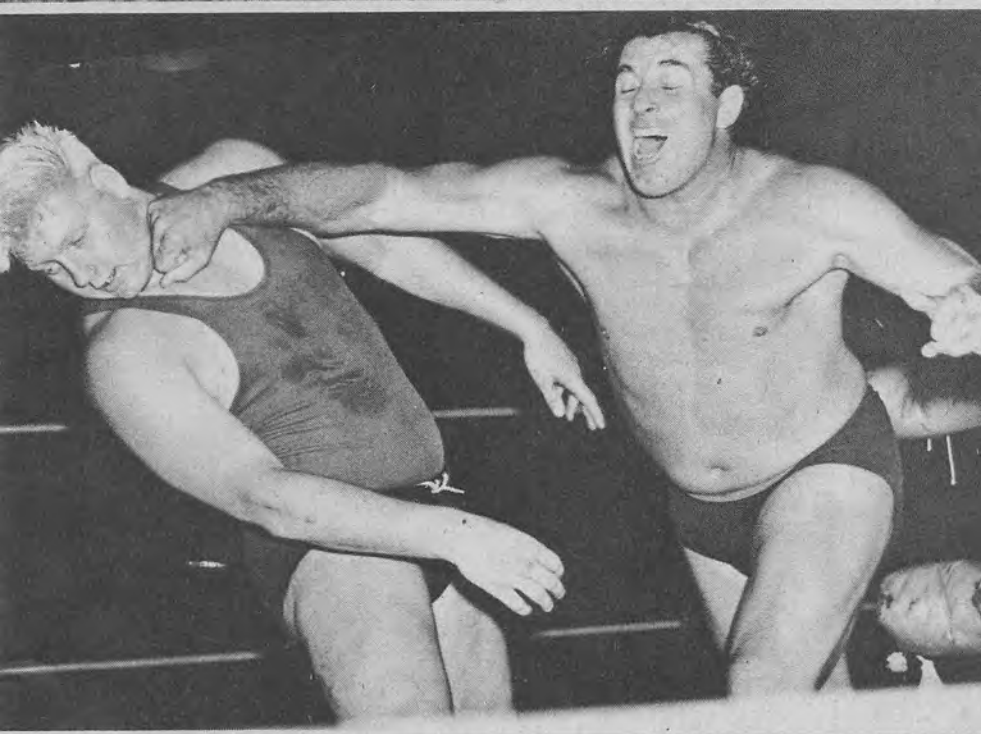
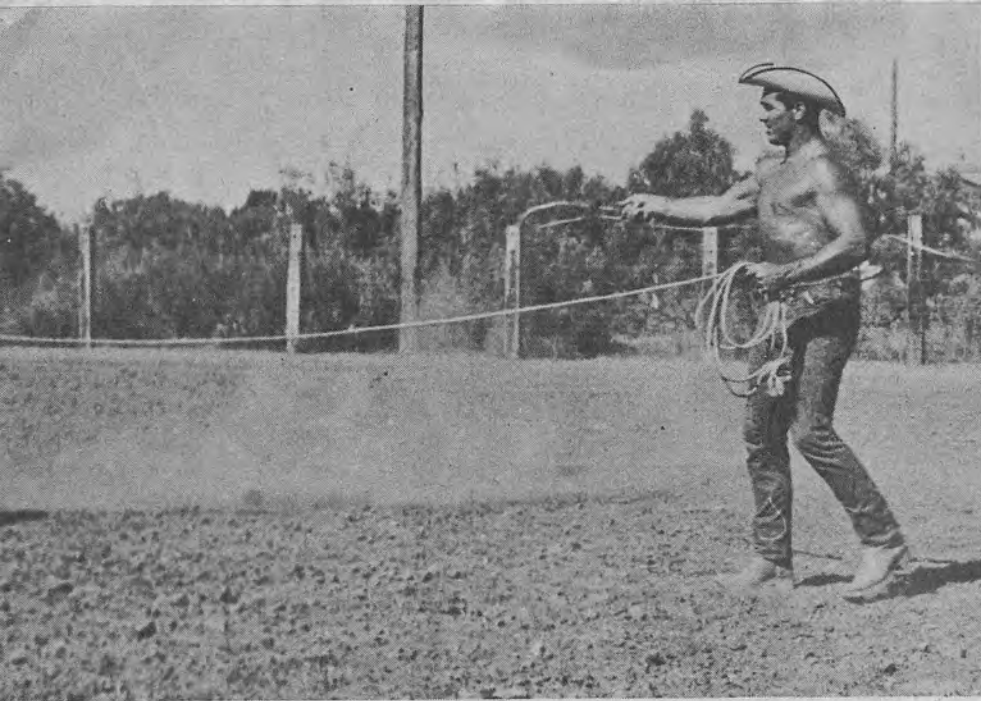
Just to give you an idea of how enthusiastic these members are, a group of 48 recently accompanied me on a chartered bus trip from Ft. Worth, Texas, to Omaha, Neb., to see him defend his Midwest title.

Naturally, Bob won. He wouldn't want to disappoint us!

□



When asked, "Which is your greatest love, your ranch or wrestling?" Ellis declines to give a direct answer. But we suspect that if forced to choose, he would take the ranch. What little time he has at the ranch is spent in training horses (above) and riding his favorite mount, a magnificent black stallion (left). But the cowboy gets as big a kick smacking "bad" guys like Dick Murdock (right, above) and winning (far right) as he does when he's in the saddle. Right: Bob Ellis as millions of fans know him.





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A ROOKIE REMEMBERS HIS FIRST MAIN EVENT

Photos By Gene Gordon

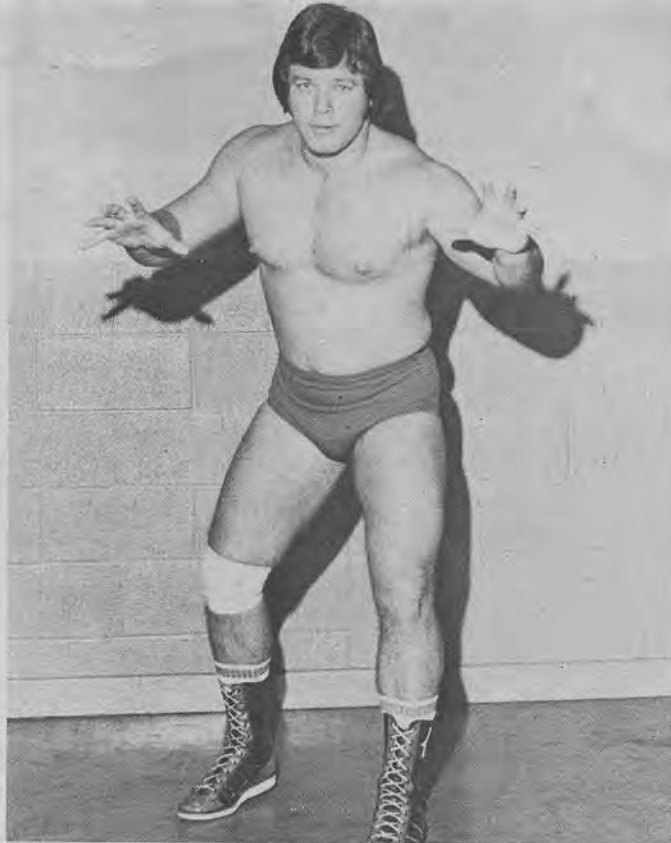
Scott Casey WAS nervous. He had a right to be. Tonight was his first main event wrestling match.

He had proven himself to be a damned good wrestler for someone "up and coming." But until today it was different. Previously, fans would see him on a card and the other wrestlers were the ones in the most exciting match of the evening—the main event.

But now Scott and Mike York were the ones in the spotlight and every fan in the crowd was watching them intently.

"I remember being kind of shakey," said Casey afterwards. "I remember thinking this night was all

Young Scott Casey proved he's more than an up and coming rookie by holding veteran Mike York to a draw.



that mattered. My past matches meant nothing now. It didn't make a difference how I wrestled before. This was it—right here and now!"

Casey stepped under the ropes and the fans roared. They liked what they saw when he wrestled some of those other guys—men whose names you don't remember. Scott was once one of those nameless ones. But now he was known as a young wrestler to be watched. He'll be "somebody" some day, they were saying.

They hooted and howled when York entered. They hated him! They remembered his vicious tactics when he teamed with Frank Monti in the Alaskans. But nevertheless they remembered him better than Casey. He'd been around—a lot longer.

It didn't make Scott feel comfortable. But there wasn't time to think now. The match was beginning.

"I've got to admit I was truly scared at that moment," Scott was to reveal later. "I see this big guy

coming at me, knowing all those eyes in the audience were watching my every move. I knew I could handle myself. But all those people scared me!

"All at once I was in a headlock that I couldn't get out of. Finally, I was able to grab York from behind and flip him. The crowd loved it and it made me feel good. But more important, I wasn't being choked.

"But I soon realized how experienced York was. I had just gotten out of one hold and was already in another. His hammerlock was shooting pain throughout my shoulders and back. But I was finally able to reach back and twist out of it.

"Then I kneedropped York, but to my surprise he was up and heading for me in an instant. Now he was mad! He launched into a series of punches and kicks that knocked the breath right out of me. But he shouldn't have done that! That dirty wrestling turned me into a madman!



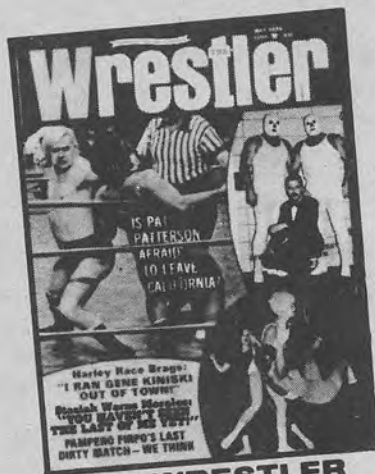
Scott loses his cool and punches York in the back while twisting his arm. "You can't keep cool with a killer like him," he says.

What goes through the mind of a young wrestler when he encounters his first main event? Popular Scott Casey was asked to recall how it was for him on that memorable night. This is how he remembers it

(Continued on page 57)

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DOES ANYBODY OUT THERE WANT



Ivan Kalmikoff is not just a manager—he's also a chaperone. And until the day he finally gets Mighty Igor married off, Ivan will remain a very unhappy man

Igor assumes his masculine pose. "Maybe if the girls see my muscles one of them will want to marry me," Igor declared. His manager wants to marry him off.

DOES ANYBODY OUT there want to marry a 5-9, 280-pound Polish pussycat who doesn't speak a word of English? If so, Ivan Kalmikoff, manager of the Mighty Igor, would love to talk to you.

"I've got to get him married off," Ivan said, sounding very much like a frightened mother afraid her child will never marry. "His social life is killing me."

You would think that one of the world's most popular wrestlers would have little trouble finding a wife. That's what you would think. But according to Kalmikoff, the opposite is true.

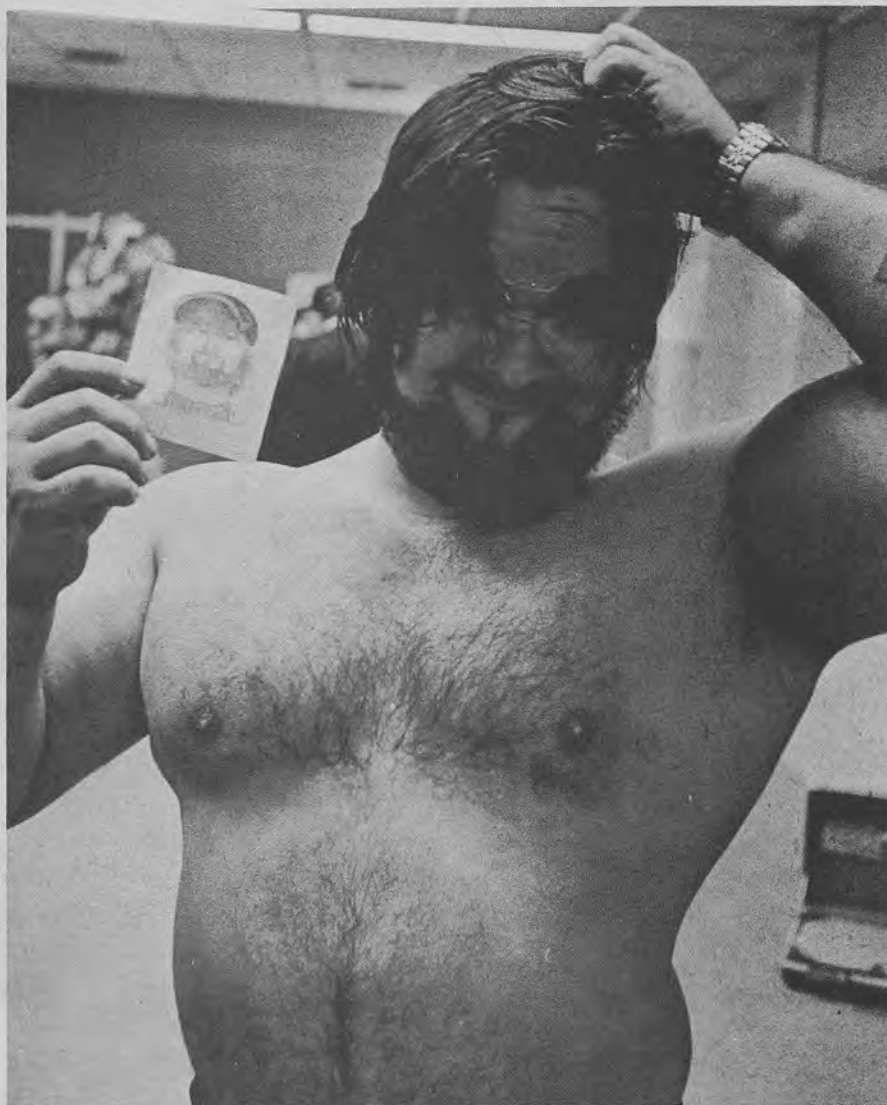
"Igor wants to get married. He wants to get married to a nice American girl, preferably of Polish ancestry. But Igor does not speak a single word of English. And because of this language problem, I have to tag along whenever he dates an American girl. I serve as his interpreter. And to tell the truth—the job is getting dangerous!"

The incident Ivan refers to he considers typical. He was chaperoning Igor on a date with an American girl and... well... let's let him tell it.

"We went to this dimly lit Chinese restaurant in Toronto," Kalmikoff remembers, "and I was sitting next to Igor and the girl was sitting directly across from us. Igor always likes to look at the girl he's dating.

"Anyway, we're not there five minutes yet and Igor tells me to tell her she's very beautiful. So I tell her and she smiles. Somewhere between the wonton soup and the egg rolls he

TO MARRY IGOR?



asks me to tell her he loves her! 'Igor!' I said in Polish. 'You just met her! How could you love her?' He tells me 'never mind—just tell her I love her!'

"So I lean across the table and whisper in her ear 'Igor loves you.' She blushes and then she smiles again. Igor is smiling too, but he always smiles, so I didn't have the slightest idea about what he was thinking. The next one really floors me. He's chomping on a spare rib and he leans across to me and tells me to tell her he wants to marry her. 'You want to what?' I asked, dumb-

founded. 'I want to marry her,' Igor repeated. 'Igor, you just met her,' I answered. 'You gotta be kidding.'

"But he wasn't.

"He was quite serious.

"'Igor wants to marry you,' I whisper to the girl. I feel like an idiot. I don't even know if he knew her name. Well, as soon as I tell her that—she hauls off and slaps me in the face!

"'Look,' I said, 'he wants to marry you—I don't. Don't hit me! Hit him!'

"So she does—right in the mouth—and then she grabs her handbag and storms out of the restaurant. I



"Is that what she thinks I look like?" questions Igor, examining sketch drawn by fan (left). Right: He asks Bull Pometti's opinion.

tried to tell Igor he was moving too fast, but he wouldn't listen. It happens every time!"

Exactly what kind of girl does Mighty Igor want to marry?

Kalmikoff asked Igor and, as his face lit up in a smile, he replied in Polish.

"First of all, she's got to know how to cook up a great dish of kielbasy," Igor told us through Kalmikoff. "An absolute must is that she love the outdoors, walking through the woods, going camping, that sort of thing. She doesn't have to be a real beauty. As a matter of fact, I'd rather have a plain looking girl with a great personality than a beautiful girl with everything but a good personality. The final thing is she must have a good sense of humor. This is very important to me. I love a girl who can tell a good joke, and who can take one too. I'm the type of guy who likes to laugh a lot."

Kalmikoff hopes Igor finds a wife. Soon! The chaperoning bit is killing him. (Continued on page 52)

Pak Song said it ***"I'M SORRY I DIDN'T***

When you talk about wrestling down in Amarillo, Texas, you'd better not forget to mention Dory and Terry Funk. As far as the folks in those parts are concerned wrestling *IS* Dory and Terry Funk.

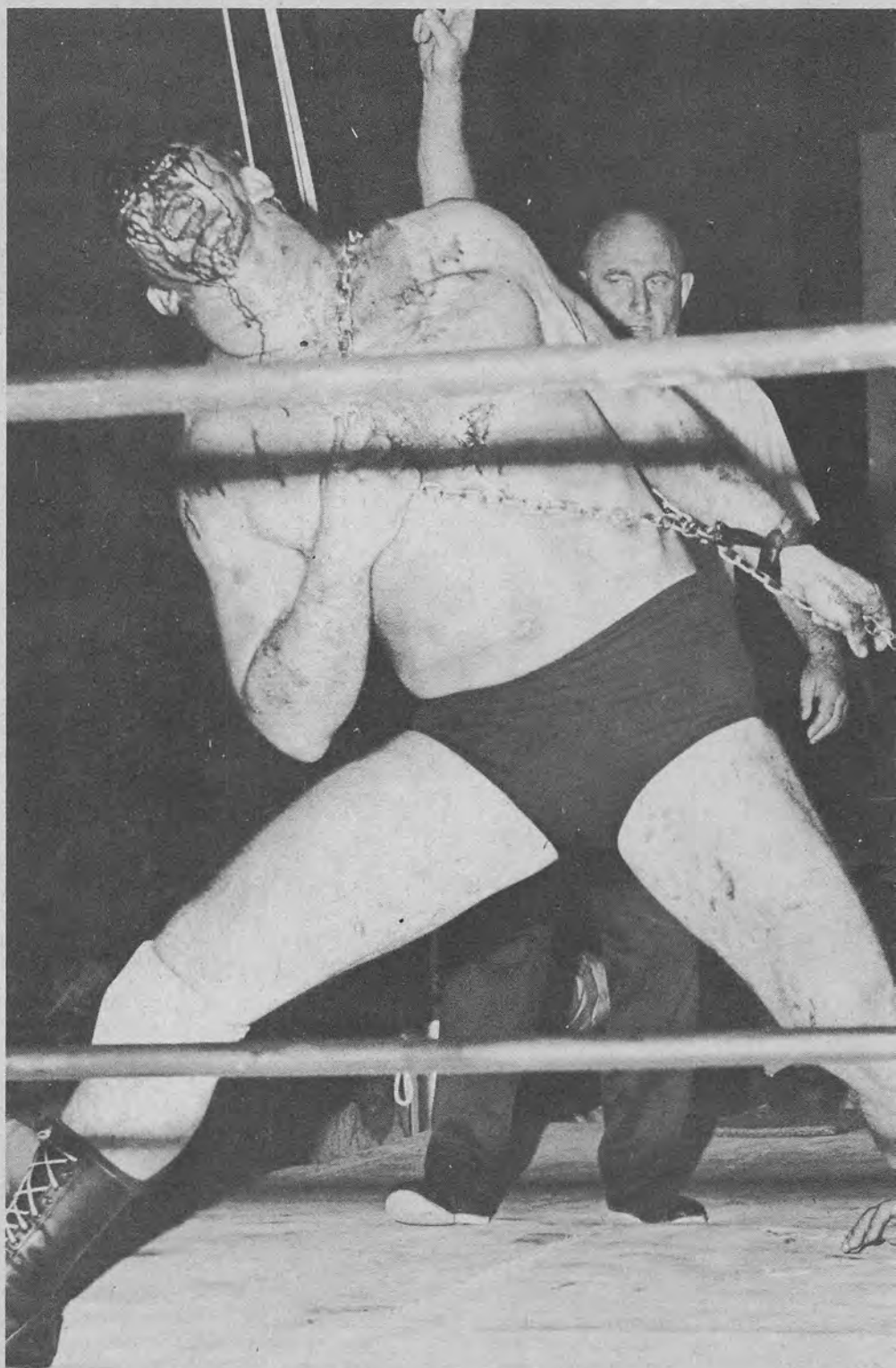
Understandably, it's easy to see why there were no tickets available on that memorable night of September 17, 1970, in the Amarillo Sports Arena. In fact, all the tickets were gobbled up three weeks before the big match. That was the night Pak Song, the Korean Wild Man, had vowed revenge against young Terry Funk.

Shortly before, Song had faced Dory Funk for the world's championship right there in Amarillo. Funk retained his crown—but just barely—as Song committed just about every atrocity a wrestler can get away with in the ring. In fact, Song thought he should have won the match, claiming the referee cost him the title. He would, Song threatened, take out his revenge on Terry, making him pay for the title that should belong to him.

And make him pay he did.

There have been some memorable matches in Amarillo but nothing came close to that night of September 17. It was supposed to be a Russian Chain Match—an event in which two wrestlers are linked together by a wrist chain. Terry, the "Chain Match Champion," agreed to put his own title on the line against Song.

But Song, as the fans quickly found out, wanted more than the title. He wanted Terry's blood. He got that—and more!



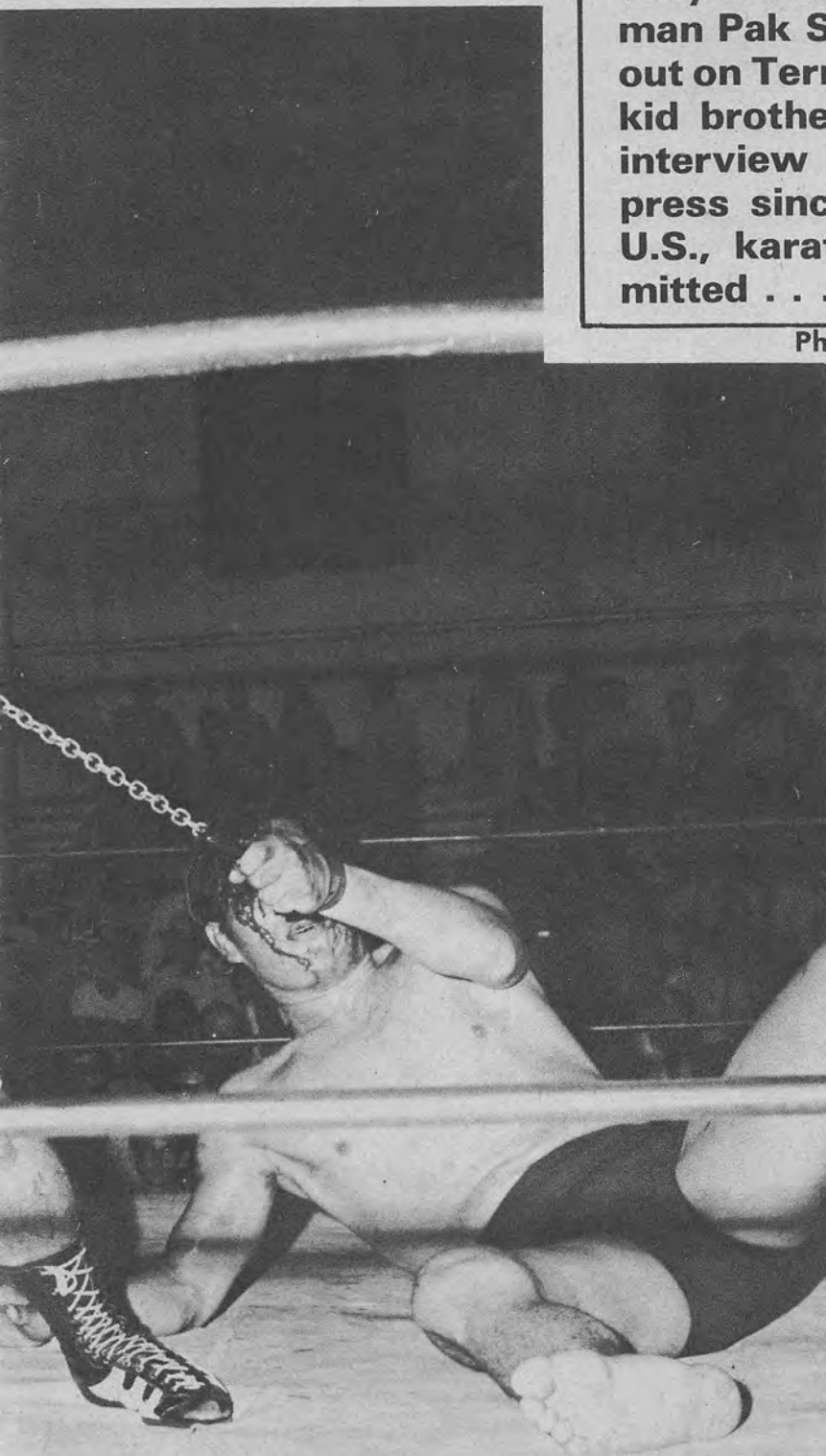
One of the most dramatic wrestling pictures ever taken shows bloodied Terry Funk pulling Song with chain.

and he meant it...

KILL TERRY FUNK!"

Why would giant Korean wild-man Pak Song take his hatred out on Terry Funk, the champ's kid brother? In this, the first interview he has granted the press since his arrival in the U.S., karate expert Song admitted . . .

Photos by Bill Beach



The huge Pak Song holds Terry's head with one hand and whips his fist at Funk's cut eye.

The Korean powerhouse established his brutality right from the beginning. As soon as one end of the chain was fastened to his wrist he pulled away, jerking the other end of the chain out of the referee's hand. When he got complete control of the chain he forced Funk and the referee out of the ring. Continually, Song swung the chain at Terry who was still outside the ropes. Not able to get at Terry, Song started swinging at everybody who was in range. One of his wild swings caught our photographer on his head. Despite a nine-inch gash, our brave photographer, with an assistant holding a towel to his



head, continued to record all the furious action.

Song was not about to apologize to anybody. But he did calm down enough to allow the other end of the chain to be fastened to Funk's wrist and Terry climbed back into the ring.

Song did not let up. He somehow managed to get behind Funk and wrapped the chain around Terry's face and both his hands. What the referee did not seem to realize was that Funk could not breathe. He actually began turning blue and it looked like Song would get his savage revenge quickly. But Song wanted more than that.

He eased up on the chain slightly—enough to let Terry squirm loose. But Terry, although loose, was reeling around the ring. Pak

Left: Terry jolts Song with his shoulder. Below: Song about to slam chain against Funk's face.

Song wasted no time.

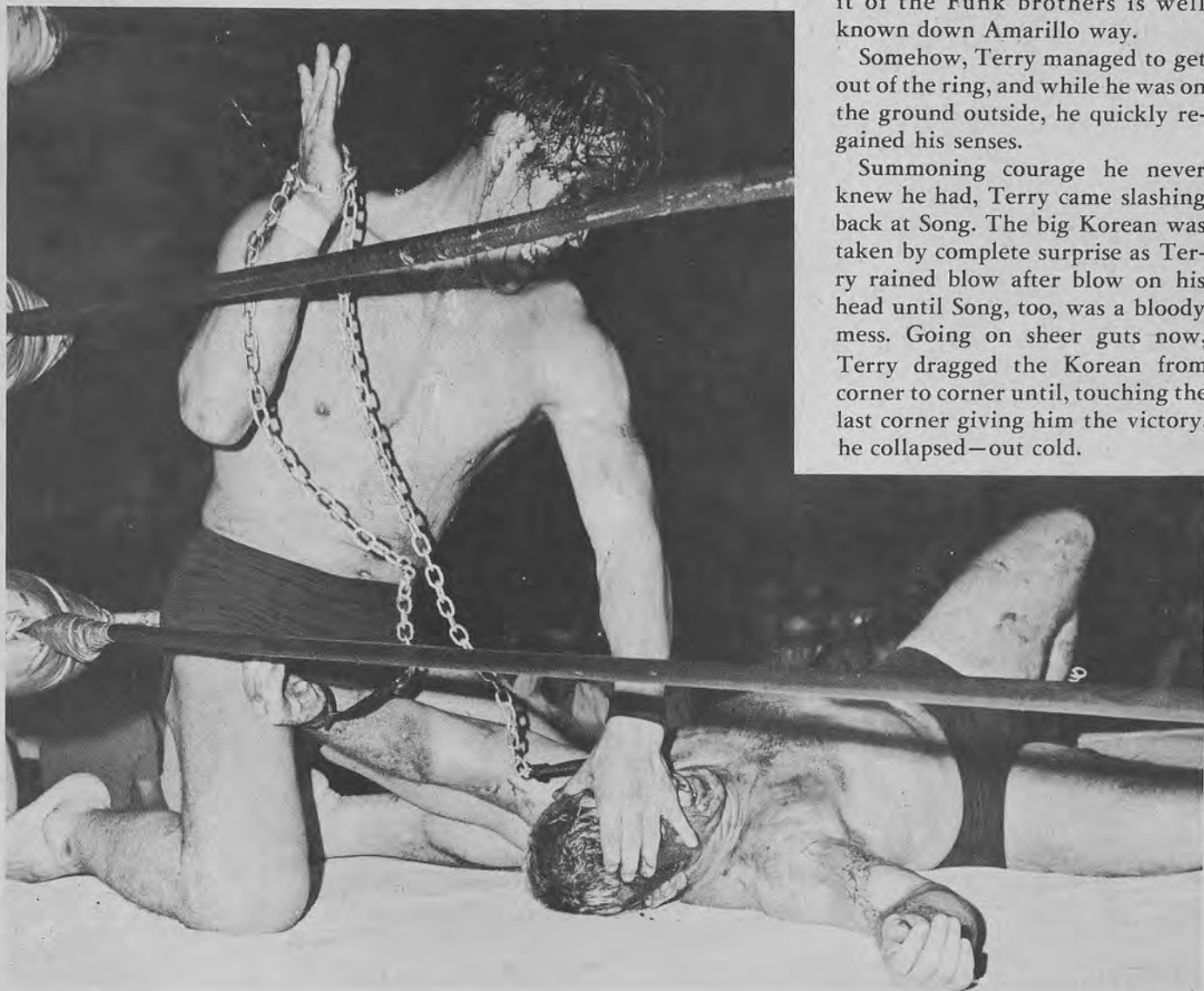
He combined his devastating Korean karate chops with a pounding of the chain and suddenly Funk's face turned into a mask of blood. This wasn't enough either. Song then took the chain and rubbed it across the open gashes on Funk's face. Both wrestlers and most of the ring were now splattered with Funk's blood. Fans pleaded in vain to the referee to stop the bout.

By this time, Song had lost control of himself. Again and again he pounded Funk's face with the chain. Terry could not see. As Funk lay flat on his back, almost unconscious, Song figured it was time to end it.

To win a Russian Chain Match, a wrestler must drag his opponent to all four corners of the ring and touch each corner post. Song started to drag the dazed and bloodied Terry Funk. But the fighting spirit of the Funk brothers is well known down Amarillo way.

Somehow, Terry managed to get out of the ring, and while he was on the ground outside, he quickly regained his senses.

Summoning courage he never knew he had, Terry came slashing back at Song. The big Korean was taken by complete surprise as Terry rained blow after blow on his head until Song, too, was a bloody mess. Going on sheer guts now, Terry dragged the Korean from corner to corner until, touching the last corner giving him the victory, he collapsed—out cold.



Song, seeing Terry unconscious, refused to believe he had been beaten. When told, he went berserk.

As Funk lay on the mat, the Korean pummelled him with the chain and karate chops. It was brutal. It was so brutal that some wrestlers who had been in earlier matches ran from the dressing room to try to halt the apparent murder.

Each one of five different wrestlers were met by the crazed Korean's chain and quickly there were six unconscious bodies sprawled out on the canvas. Was there no stopping this madman?

Finally, Thunderbolt Patterson and Jerry Kozak, with the help of what seemed like half the Amarillo Police Department Riot Squad, managed to grab the Korean from behind and hold him. The bloodshed was over at last.

Funk, although he didn't know it, had kept his chain match championship. But it cost him 34 stitches in his face and five days in the



Above: Terry seemed finished after being thrown from ring. Left: Other wrestlers rushed to Funk's defense.



hospital. The Korean spent the next three days in a jail cell—for his own protection. The angry crowd was talking about getting guns to finish Song off—and down in Amarillo they don't kid about such things.

It wasn't until three weeks later that the Korean had calmed down enough to talk.

"Two times they stole the championship from me," he moaned. "After the match with Dory I vowed that I would kill his brother. I could have beat him right at the beginning but I wanted to hurt him first. I wanted to see his blood all over the ring. I wanted to kill him. I'm sorry I didn't.

"If I get the chance to meet either of those guys again I will not be interested in winning the championship. The referee will find some way to make sure I don't win it like he did the last two times. Next time I'll go strictly for the kill.

"You can't give the championship to a dead man!"

Fred Blassie Reveals:



"Do I hate Tolos for what he did? Not really. You see, I understand his type, his nature, his mentality."

'WHY TOLOS BLINDED ME!'

They've written Fred Blassie's obituary before—many times. But he always came back roarin'. In this exclusive interview—the first since he was blinded by John Tolos—Freddie reveals the inside story behind the bizarre incident and what the fans (and Tolos) can expect from him in the future





THE AMBULANCE SCREECHED around the corner on two wheels. Lights flashing, siren wailing, it made its way through the crowded Los Angeles streets. Destination: A Los Angeles hospital. Cargo: Freddie Blassie. Object: To save the sight in his left eye.

As the red and white ambulance pulled into the hospital emergency entrance, out of the back jumped a short, stocky man wearing glasses and carrying a doctor's bag.

"Get an ophthalmologist over here fast," he screamed to a nurse as he ran into the building.

"Set up operating room five and get that man ready for surgery. We'll sign him in later!"

Freddie Blassie never saw the interns who lifted him out of the ambulance, placed him gently on a table and rolled him toward the operating room. He never saw Dr. Bernhart Schwartz run into the physician's locker room to change into his hospital whites. But what terrified Dr. Schwartz was not the sights Freddie missed enroute to the operating room. He was worried that Freddie might not see anything after he came out—*ever!*

While Blassie thanked the audience for naming him "California's Wrestler of the Year," Tolos grabbed a handful of very toxic Monsel's Powder from the doctor's bag (which can be seen on floor next to Tolos' left leg) and unleashed it directly into Fred's face. Dr. Bernhart Schwartz rushed to aid Blassie (right), later treated him at the hospital (below).

Blassie had been blinded. Intentionally! Cruelly! Viciously! Cowardly! He was attacked by his former friend and tag-team partner John Tolos, who threw a poisonous substance, known as Monsel's Powder, into his eyes. And Tolos timed his attack just at the moment Blassie was receiving an award for being voted California's "Wrestler of the Year." Later, Blassie would call that award "one of the happiest moments of my life." He would have said it earlier while he was standing before the TV cameras. But he never got the chance.

To understand the basis of the attack it is necessary to go back only a short time before, when Tolos won the Americas' Championship title from Blassie in the wildest, bloodiest match ever seen in California. Blassie, formerly one of the roughest men in the ring, had been wrestling clean—or at least clean for him. But against Tolos it was a war and "Biting" Freddie was back to his old form. He had to be. Tolos was as vicious as only John Tolos can be.

When Tolos won, he thought he was a cinch to get the "Wrestler of the Year" award. He wanted it real bad. But as the



"When they presented me with that big trophy I was so proud. So really proud. It was the happiest moment of my life. Then it happened . . ."



Blassie receiving "Wrestler of the Year" trophy (left), and Tolos (above), obviously hysterical, clutches Fred's prize after he blinded Blassie and snatched trophy from him. Tolos' astonishing actions had everybody in a state of shock.

eligible wrestlers lined up for the presentation in front of the TV audience, it was not John Tolos' name that was announced. It was Blassie's.

As Freddie stepped toward the microphone to claim his award, the other wrestlers politely applauded. But not John Tolos. Tolos fumed. He was outraged.

Blassie was sincerely surprised and practically overcome with emotion as he began his "thank you" speech. With the TV cameras recording the live action, attention was centered on Freddie. Not until the last possible moment did anybody see John Tolos sneaking away towards a black medical bag mistakenly left open by Dr. Schwartz.

Without warning, Tolos grabbed the can of Monsel's Powder, ran toward Blassie and threw it in his eyes.

"Oh my God no!" screamed Dr.

Schwartz. "Stop! That stuff will blind him!" It was too late.

Screaming in pain, Blassie writhed on the ground pleading for help. Dr. Schwartz roared at the cameraman. "Call an ambulance! For God's sake call an ambulance!"

While the ambulance was being called, Dr. Schwartz did the best he could for Blassie, propping his head up with a medical bag and administering something to ease the burning. Tolos was gone. And as Blassie was lifted into the ambulance, Dr. Schwartz turned to the other wrestlers, who were too stunned to grab Tolos, and whispered softly:

"If he regains the sight in that eye it will be a miracle."

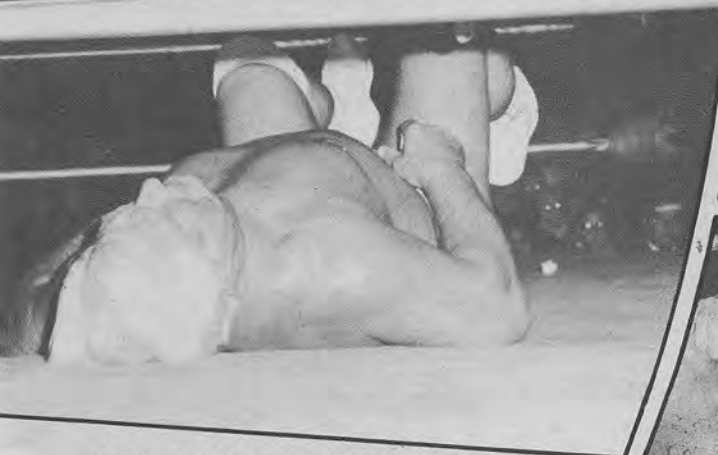
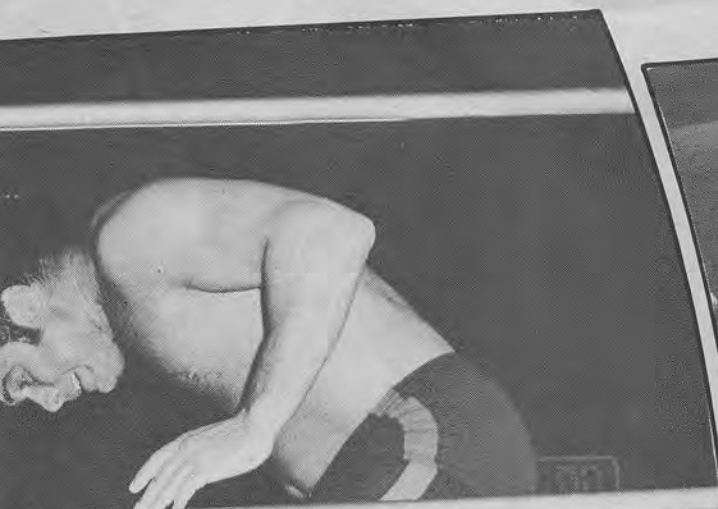
For the next two days Blassie was allowed no visitors. Wrestling fans anxiously waited for news, any tidbit, that would tell them how the popular ex-champ was

making out. But when the news came—it wasn't good.

"Mr. Blassie," the medical report stated, "has suffered severe corneal burns in his left eye and minor burns in the right eye. It is expected that after a short period of recuperation he will regain total vision of the partially-burned right eye. But at this time it appears doubtful that the vision in the left eye can be saved. Mr. Blassie is right now totally blind in the left eye."

And later on, the hospital spokesman added this off-the-record postscript: "It is doubtful that Mr. Blassie will ever wrestle again. There are complications caused from a previous iodine burn suffered, we are told, in a match with the Sheik. The tissues from that first burn hadn't healed completely. It is extremely rare that a twice-burned eye would heal."

We visited Blassie the day a specialist broke the news to him. His courage was



unbelievable. He was smiling as if nothing had happened.

"Yes, I heard the doctor's report," Freddie nodded. "I know it doesn't look good. But they've counted Freddie Blassie out before and each time he came back. And I'm going to come back again—to get Tolos—even if I have to do it with only *one* eye."

Why did Tolos do what he did? Only he knows for sure. But Blassie, who swore he didn't mind talking about it, has a few ideas.

"As you remember, I wasn't always what you would call a 'popular hero.' In the old days I could be as mean and rough as any of them. In fact there was a time when I used to be Tolos' tag-team partner.

"We had been doing well together and we knew we could win the tag-team championship. Tolos, however, didn't want me to wrestle as a single. He said if I got hurt it would ruin our chances for the

The pictures on this page capture the highlights of torrid series of bouts between Blassie (white trunks) and arch rival John Tolos—bouts which many believe were the real cause for Tolos' violent explosion and the eventual blinding of Blassie. "I knew something terrible was brewing," commented a veteran L.A. mat fan.



team title. But I received a very good offer to wrestle the Sheik and I took it. Tolos wasn't happy but there was nothing he could do.

"Well I wrestled the Sheik and that was the first time I suffered eye damage. Farouk, his crazy manager, threw iodine in my eyes. But Dr. Schwartz treated me right there in the ring and saved my sight. However, some of the tissue was burned and I was told that while I would be allowed to wrestle—another eye injury could cause permanent blindness.

"I received a return match with the Sheik and was cheered by the fans. I got my revenge that night but vowed that I would never again use foul tactics in the ring unless forced to. I hated the thought of being classified in the same category as someone like the Sheik.

"After that match, Tolos said he expected us to team up again and get the tag-team title. I told him I would under one condition—that he never again use illegal tactics in the ring. He thought I was crazy. He cursed me and accused me of taking the bread out of his mouth. 'Do you know how much money we could make as a team?' he asked. I told him I did but that it didn't matter.

"He called me a lot of other things, saying I was trying to sneak out of our agreement and that I was afraid he would steal the limelight if we stayed as a team. One thing led to another and we had it out right there in the dressing room.

"He threw a chair at me and even came after me with a letter opener. With Mil Mascaras' help, I managed to subdue him and the promoters, fearing a riot, threatened him with a \$10,000 fine if he didn't stop immediately. He didn't—and it cost him \$10,000. But when it finally ended, and Mascaras is my witness, Tolos said, 'Blassie, I'm going to get you if it's the last thing I do. It may not be in the ring, but everybody will know about it. And when I'm finished with you you'll never wrestle again!' Wrestlers are always blowing off steam, so I forgot about it soon enough. He never did."

Sipping a soft drink, Blassie continued: "Dirty wrestlers simply can't stand the clean ones. It's basically jealousy. I should know. I was like that once myself. But what they hate most of all is when one of their own kind becomes a clean wrestler and is successful and is accepted by the fans. That burns them worse than anything. That's part of Tolos' reasoning. I'm sure. Something very few fans know about Tolos is that he once tried to wres-



If Fred Blassie does recover his sight, all the credit will have to go to the fine work of Dr. Bernhart Schwartz, who administered emergency preliminary treatment immediately after Fred had been attacked and then rushed Blassie to the hospital where additional treatment was given.

tle clean. It was about five or six years ago but it didn't work out. The fans never accepted it and they still hated him. He went back to his old ways and his hatred for clean wrestlers built.

"When I made the change, and the fans accepted me, he simply couldn't stand it."

Blassie's explanation seemed logical enough. But the big question is still a mystery. Can Freddie come back?

"Freddie will be back," he vowed. "Remember what happened a few years ago? It was in '64. That kidney ailment. Not only did they tell me I'd never wrestle again—they said I was going to die. My weight slipped down to 100 pounds. Can you imagine me at 100 pounds? A reporter friend of mine even told me the sports editor at his paper had assigned him to do some research on me—so



they'd have information for my obituary.

"But I beat it. I fooled them all and came back. I came back when Farouk threw iodine in my eyes. I'll come back again. And you can tell that to John Tolos. It may take a little time. But as long as I have a breath left in my body, two arms and two legs, I will get even with Tolos. Just wait till this bandage comes off.

"They've tried to get rid of Fred Blassie before and failed. This time will be no different."

Just then, two students, young people from the same school that elected Blassie honorary student body president a short time back, came to visit. They were carrying mail sacks and wanted to read the get-well messages to Freddie.

It was a scene that never could happen to John Tolos. □

Exclusive Photos By Bob Sabre

CLAW VS. ABDOMINAL STRETCH

Wilbur Snyder has Baron Von Raschke locked up (left) as he applies pressure to the hold he's mastered, the abdominal stretch. Von Raschke puts his most valued weapon to work (below) as he tortures Snyder with a face claw.



Baron Von Raschke is a master of the claw hold. Wilbur Snyder is a master of the abdominal stretch. Sooner or later there had to be a showdown!

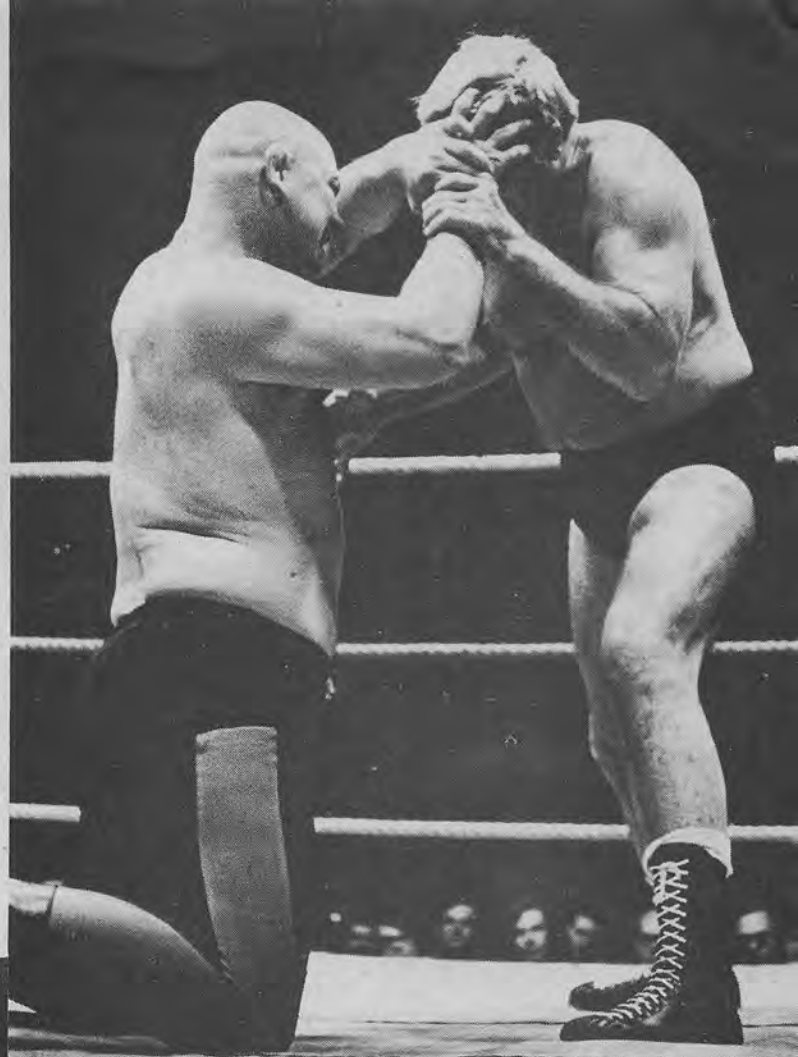
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FANS ARE STILL wondering if it was a match between the clawhold and the abdominal stretch or between Baron Von Raschke and Wilbur Snyder. Or was it a combination of both?

Baron Von Raschke is extraordinarily proud of his clawhold. He has every right to be. When the hold is applied well, and many say nobody applies it better than Von Raschke, his opponent might as well give up and go back to the dressing room. All he can look forward to is pain.

Which is about what any wrestler can look forward to if he is trapped in the abdominal stretch of Wilbur Snyder. Snyder has thousands of ways of snaring opponents in the hold and it can turn any match around. He is one of wrestling's most skilled practitioners of this devastatingly effective hold. Many wrestlers claim that if you're in Snyder's abdominal stretch for over 30 seconds, you can cancel your matches for the next two weeks. You're going to be in no condition

Wilbur works his way onto his feet (right) and Von Raschke increases the pressure. Wilbur went down again quickly. His body, a mass of pain, Von Raschke tries to break the abominable stretch, but it's no use (below). Wilbur's not letting him loose.



to wrestle.

So when the two met, fans were eager to see two experts compare their submission holds. Some even considered it a battle between the two holds.

Von Raschke dismissed the

thought that this would prove which hold is more effective. He claimed to know already.

"If I thought the abdominal stretch was even half-way effective," the Baron claimed, "I would have mastered it in three days. It's so simple

even Wilbur Snyder can be fairly proficient with it. However, it couldn't even inconvenience a child. All those stories you hear are just that—stories. I could spend a day and a half in that hold without feeling a thing. It embarrasses me when I think some people take it seriously."

Von Raschke claimed he didn't even try to work on a defense against it.

"Who could care enough," the Baron sneered, "to take the time? I've got better things to do. Like hand exercises to keep my strength up for my clawhold."

Von Raschke had a point when he said he spent a good deal of time developing the strength in his fingers. He is constantly squeezing a semi-soft rubber ball, even during meals. It is just one of many ways he continues to make his fingers like cruel vises. Some believe he exercises six hours a day though he refuses to give the exact amount of time.

Meanwhile, Snyder had no illusions that the clawhold was overrated.

"It's just an incredibly painful hold to be caught in," Snyder, a ring veteran of many years, says. "First there's the shooting pain which is replaced by a numb agony. Once the numbness sets in, you're finished. You've got to break out quickly or not at all."

Snyder also spends many hours a day in the gym perfecting a hold many consider he has already mastered. But Wilbur knows it takes constant practice to keep the neces-

A smack on the cheek infuriates the Baron. He fouled Wilbur and then put the brain claw on him.



sary edge on his abilities.

So when the two were scheduled to wrestle it was a foregone conclusion they would use their favorite holds. The outcome, however, was still very much in doubt.

The night of the match saw each man determined to prove the other could be conquered.

It was a little more than a minute into the match when it looked like the answer would be forthcoming. Von Raschke clamped his hand onto Snyder's shoulder. Wilbur struggled desperately, knowing that as the

Snyder begins to sink under the pressure of the brain claw. "It is the most devastating hold in the world," Von Raschke brags. "Not even the abdominal stretch compares with it," he adds.

seconds ticked away so did his chances of escape. Finally, his struggling became weak and it looked like the end. Then, inexplicably, Von Raschke released the hold.

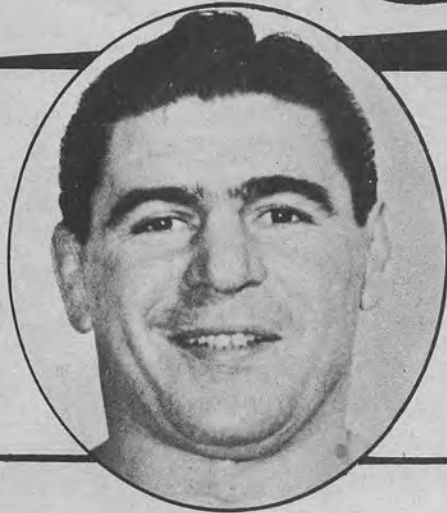
Stunned and surprised, Snyder struggled to his feet. He was on his feet long enough to feel the powerful fingers of Von Raschke snare and encircle his face. His struggles resumed with as little suc-

cess as the first time. Then, as he was on the verge of submission, Von Raschke let him free.

By now Snyder knew what was happening. Like a cat with a trapped mouse, Baron was playing with his victim before the kill. The outspread hand again came toward him with cruel swiftness when Wilbur made a desperate move. With almost nothing left, he reared back and

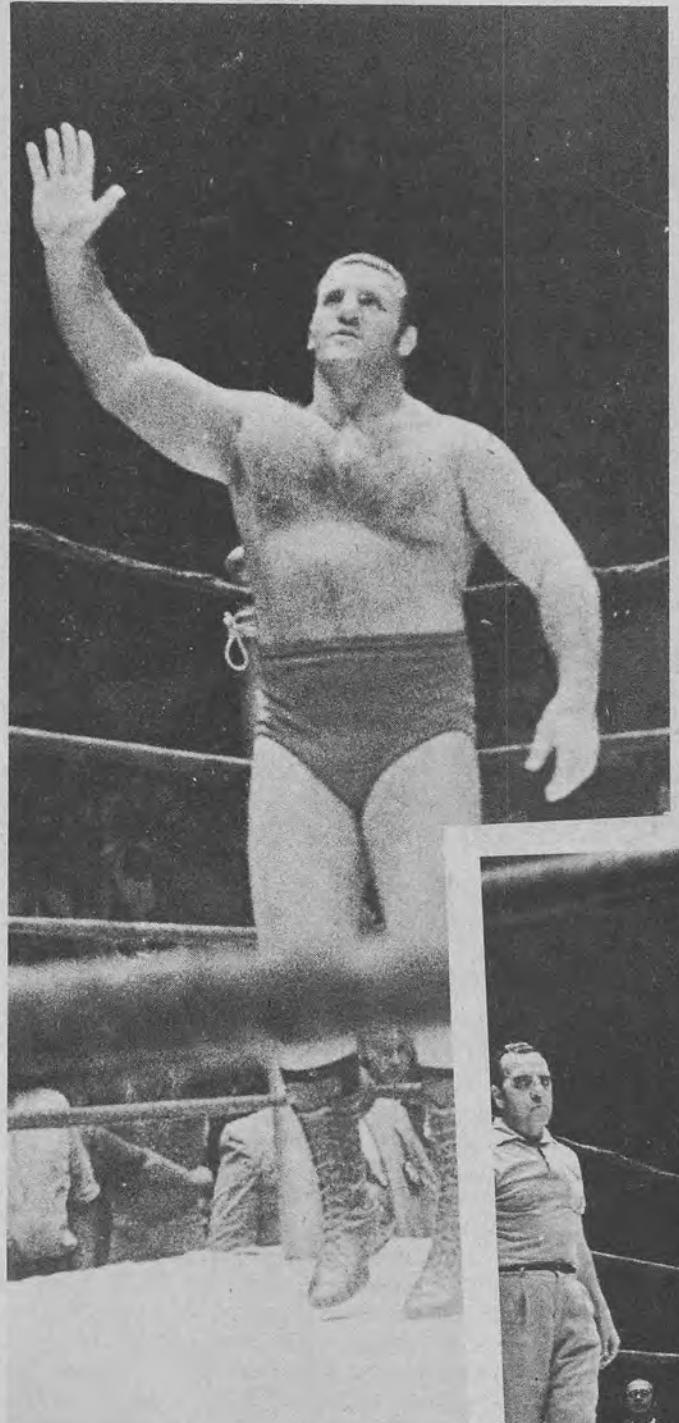
(Continued on page 60)

SAMMARTINO CHALL



Highly respected Pittsburgh promoter and former mat great Ace Freeman (left), gave *THE WRESTLER* this exclusive interview, for which we are most grateful.

In this exclusive interview with Pittsburgh promoter Ace Freeman, who is also one of Sammartino's closest confidants, it is revealed for the first time that the once close friendship between Bruno and champion Pedro Morales has cooled and that Sammartino has already challenged Morales. Promoter Freeman has gone so far as to offer Pedro a record guarantee to lay his title on the line against Bruno but, according to Freeman, "I haven't heard from the champion." It is also reported that Sammartino is getting tired of waiting for Pedro to make up his mind. Says the immortal ex-champion, "When I had the belt I gave every deserving challenger a chance to win it. I never ducked anybody."



ENGES

MORALES!

WHEN BRUNO SAMMARTINO'S eight-year reign as World Wide Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Champion ended, his eventual successor turned out to be Pedro Morales, who took the title from Ivan Koloff, who defeated Bruno.

Sammartino, who makes his home near Pittsburgh, announced he was semi-retiring and that he would give serious thought to whether or not he would ever go after the title again.

To keep in shape, Sammartino has been working out at a gym regularly and has appeared, about once a month, on cards in Pittsburgh. According to insiders, Bruno has been doing this because he hadn't yet reached a final decision on whether to return on a full-time basis and he wanted to keep in shape in case he decided he would.

His decision was made on July 23 when he appeared at New York's Madison Square Garden and

Left: The idolized Sammartino raises his hand in a gesture of thanks for the tremendous ovation he received from New York City fans as he was introduced before his triumphant return to Madison Square Garden. Above: With his manager Arnold Skaoland (left) by his side, Bruno moves to mid-ring as announcer Johnny Addie calls his name.



defeated Blackjack Mulligan in a scant 64 seconds.

Two incidents regarding that bout may prove to be significant. Initially, Morales, who wrestled in the feature bout that night, did not speak to Sammartino in the dressing room or vice versa. But more important, with Bruno on the card, 21,912 fans showed up to contribute to a gate of \$103,485. Both figures were world records—and the attendance even topped the crowd that saw the Joe Frazier-Muhammad Ali "Fight of the Century."

Morales, as champion, has been drawing excellent crowds—but not like that. It is not, of course, his fault. His loyal legion of fans attend all his bouts, but the fact remains that since Sammartino left New York many former fans are simply not turning out.

The question has been "Where is Bruno?" Each week, hundreds of letters have been pouring into our office asking that question. Statements such as "he's too young to retire," or "he's got to come back because wrestling isn't the same without him," have been expressed over and over. Obviously, the fans want Bruno back—and the 21,912 people who showed up for the July 23 card proved it.

This leads to one more question that must be answered: if Bruno is back—will he be given a shot at a Pedro's title? The answer, of course, rests with Morales. But through an exclusive, tape-recorded interview with Pittsburgh promoter Ace Freeman, we have learned that Bruno does want his title back and that he has even asked Morales for a title bout!

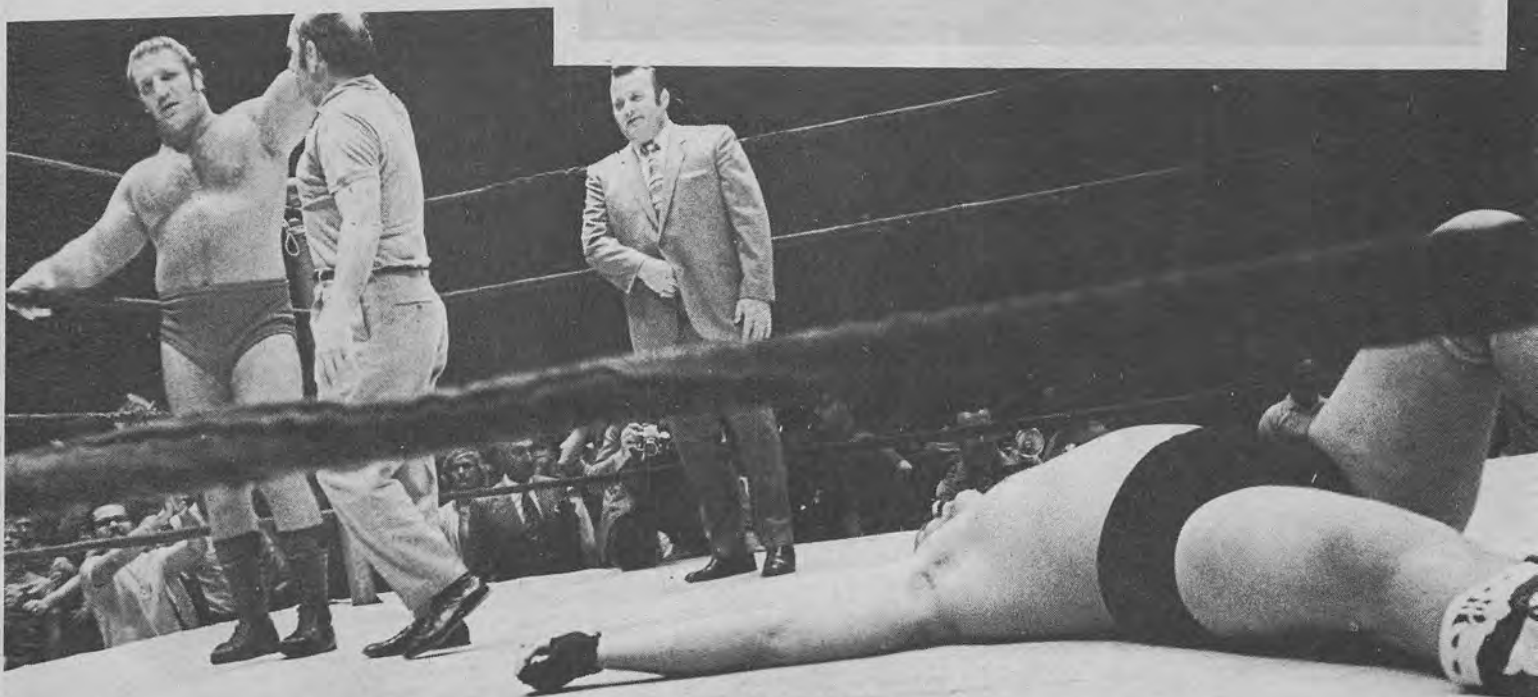
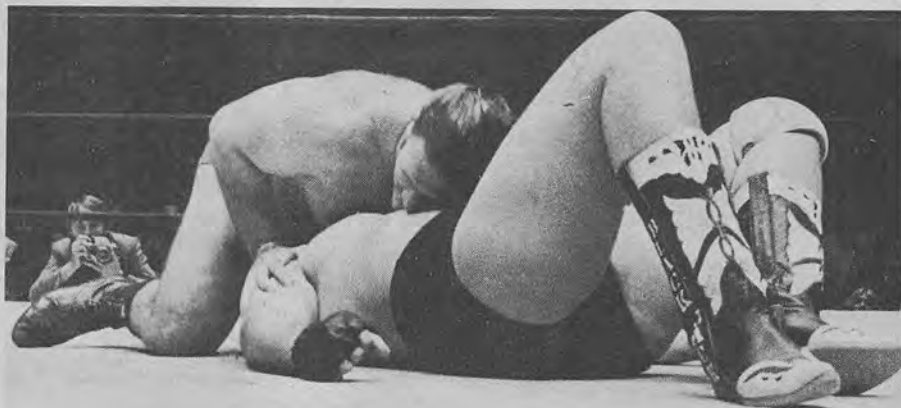
Here is that exclusive interview with Ace Freeman, the man who may turn out to be the key to a Sammartino-Morales title match:

Question: Will there be a match between Bruno Sammartino and Pedro Morales?

Answer: Well, we, Spectator Sports Inc., have made large monetary offers to Morales to accept a match with Sammartino, but so far we haven't received an answer. In other words, Pedro is probably all booked and he is concerned about losing his title to Sammartino.

Q: If the match comes off, would it be here in

Right: Sammartino uses a body press to finish off huge Blackjack Mulligan in his sensational return-to-New-York-bout. Below: the referee raises Bruno's hand as Mulligan lays stretched out on the canvas and manager Arnold Skaoland stands between them to share in the glory.



Pittsburgh, in New York or somewhere else?

A: We would try to arrange it wherever it is convenient for Mr. Morales. We're that anxious to do it whether it is in New York's Shea Stadium or here in Pittsburgh. We're offering Morales all kinds of opportunities to take on Sammartino. But we have not yet heard from him.

Q: Do you think Morales may venture to Pittsburgh to defend his title against someone other than Bruno?

A: It's hard to say since Pittsburgh is considered Bruno's stamping grounds. But as far as wrestling Bruno is concerned, as long as Mr. Morales defends his title within the limitations the W.W.W.F. sets up, he's reasonably safe. He doesn't really have to wrestle Sammartino for six or eight months. Then, legally, we can put pressure on him, so to speak.

Q: What does Sammartino have to say about all this?

A: I can give you that information from an

article I'm preparing for the next edition of our summer wrestling program. I'll read it to you. "Bruno Sammartino, not one to mince words, fired off a challenge to Pedro Morales, the new heavyweight champion. The husky Italian has asked state athletic commissions in Pennsylvania, New York and Washington, D.C., to recognize his claim for a title match with Morales. Said Bruno: 'When I was champion I gave everybody a chance to win the title. Now I want to be afforded that same opportunity. My record speaks for itself. I was champ for nearly eight years and I can be credited with drawing record gates at the old and new Madison Square Gardens in New York. I also set records in Japan and Australia. I would like to bring the world title back to Pittsburgh.' Bruno is a little upset with Morales' dodges.

Q: Have you ever seen Morales wrestle?

A: Yes. I think he is a good wrestler and he's made quite a reputation for himself out on the west coast. He won the Pacific Coast title and he



Champion Pedro Morales sat alone in a corner of the Madison Square Garden dressing room while Sammartino received all the warm greetings from devoted New York insiders. "Bruno is a great man," was all the champion would say.

Above: Bruno and Morales (right) shared the same dressing room on the night Sammartino returned to New York. But it was quite obvious that their once warm friendship had cooled. Right: Rudy Miller, the man who discovered Bruno, insists Pedro is avoiding Sammartino.



beat Koloff. I believe that beating Koloff was one of those lucky breaks, and he never cared to wrestle Koloff after that.

Q: I would like your comment on the way Koloff was beaten—the situation as it occurred?

A: It was a questionable type of pin. I did not see the match myself, but I heard that Koloff was, well... that they shouldn't have taken the title away from him. It seems to me that Morales is rather evasive in his tactics and he doesn't take any foolish chances.

Q: Morales hasn't met any wrestler who is really impressive or outstanding except for big Blackjack Mulligan. What's your comment on this?

A: Well, I think he has beaten this Blackjack Mulligan. I'm not too familiar with him but I heard he is a former football player and a good competitor. I haven't seen him wrestle so I can't pass judgment on this question.

Q: Would you then say that Bruno Sammartino would easily defeat Morales if they met?

A: I have no doubt in my mind that Bruno would have no real problem handling him. Bruno has so many things going for him. He's still young, he is exceedingly strong and he is dedicated to wrestling. He held the title longer than any man in wrestling history, and, I might add, he has set attendance records that will never be topped.

Q: I personally feel that a Morales-Sammartino match in Pittsburgh, perhaps in the new Three Rivers Stadium, would draw a sizeable amount of people from the New England area and even from the midwest. Do you agree?

A: Yes. Ever since Morales won the title we have had calls and letters inquiring "What happens now?" And that is what we'd like to find out. We have given him big offers where is concerned, if that means anything to him, but apparently Morales is successful in drawing large crowds wherever he wrestles, like in Boston, Philadelphia and New York. I would venture to say that his trips are limited to where he can stay reasonable safe with his title. I doubt very much if we will see much of Morales in Pittsburgh.

It is obvious, from the above interview and from the reactions of Morales and Sammartino when they met in the dressing room at the Garden, that things are not the same as they used to be between the once close friends.

Bruno, according to Freeman, wants a title match. Only Morales can give it to him. Will he? Millions of fans await that answer! □

THE NIGHT EDDIE GRAHAM

When vicious Buddy Colt ended Johnny "Rubberman" Walker's career, Johnny's good friend Eddie Graham vowed to avenge Walker's terrible beating. Instead, Eddie wound up receiving a whipping almost as bad as the one Colt gave Walker!

Photos By Gene Gordon

THE ADVICE WAS short and to the point. "I'm not saying you should never wrestle again," the doctor told Johnny Walker. "But if you do you could wind up a lifelong cripple!"

Walker left the doctor's office in a state of shock.

"It's not easy to hear someone tell you that what you've done for 20 years must come to an end," he

said sadly and with a catch in his throat. "This is something I never anticipated. I just never thought about it."

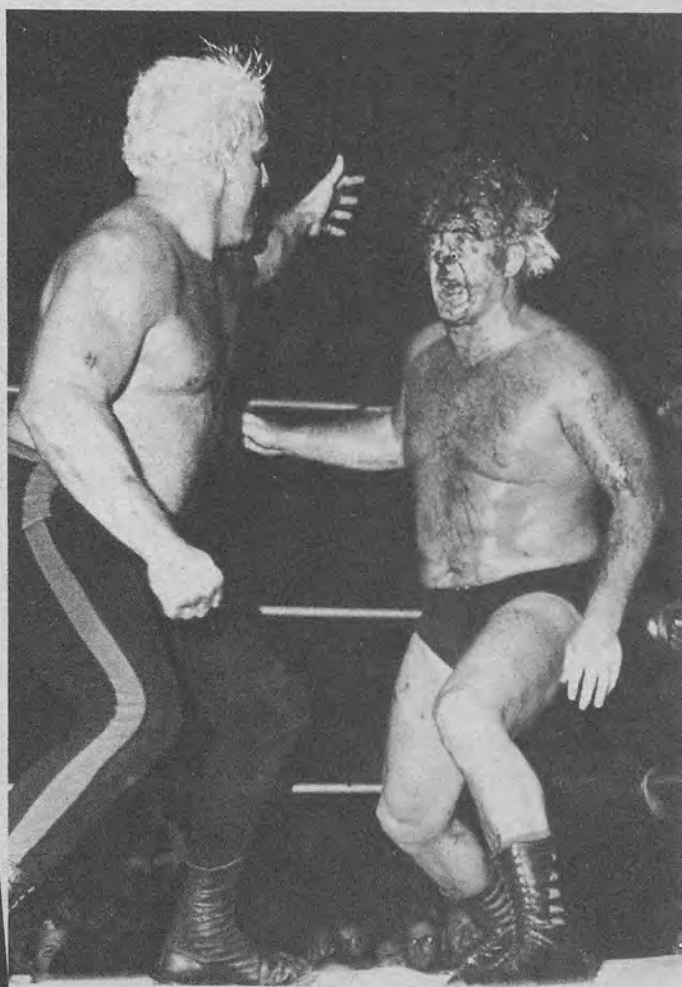
All of Walker's friends were saddened by the news. But one man was more than saddened. He was angered. Quite angered.

"How many more guys have to cut short their careers because of people like Buddy Colt?" Eddie

Graham asked. "How many more decent men like Johnny Walker have to leave a sport they've devoted their lives to because some maniac wasn't happy until he permanently injured his opponent? Maybe Johnny's lucky. He didn't die in the ring like a couple of others did last year."

In this new era of brutality, more

(Continued on page 62)

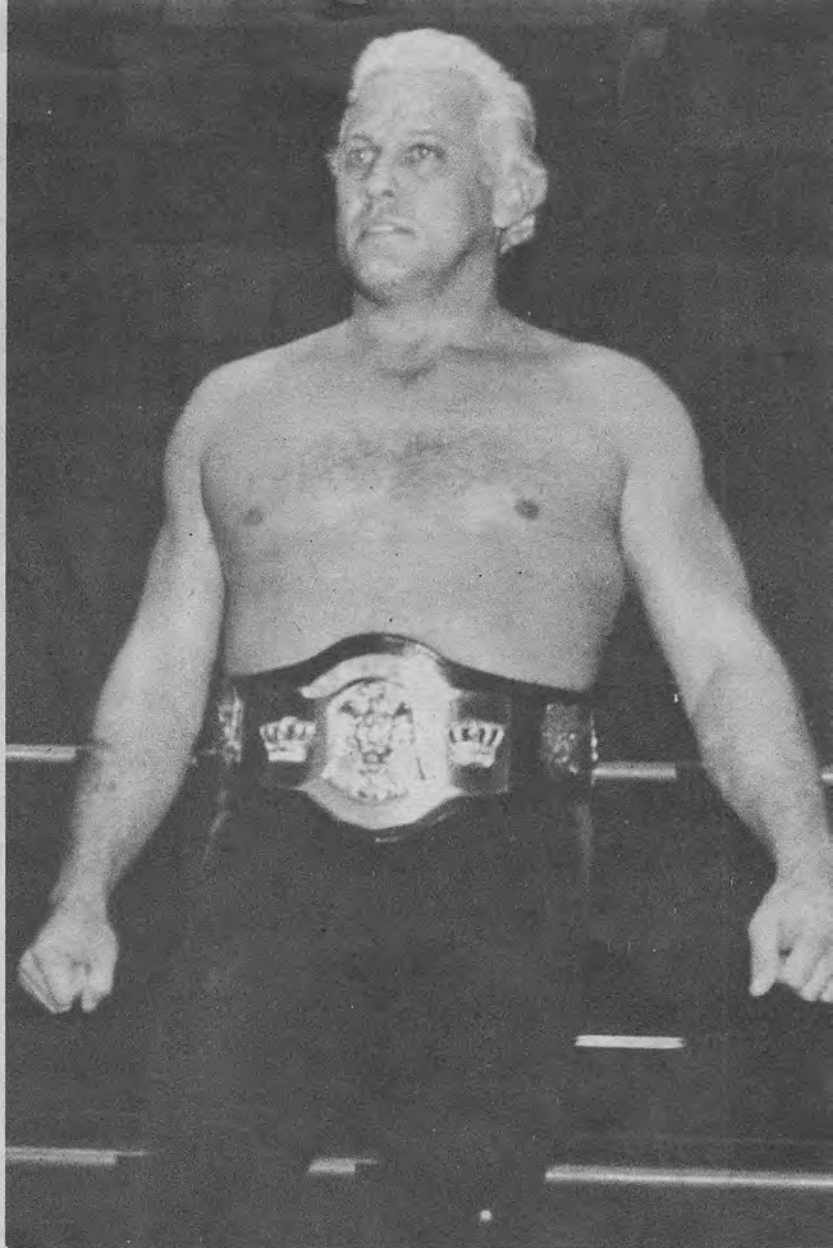


After Graham took the first fall, Eddie made the mistake of trying to slug with Buddy Colt. And Colt (above and left) turns Eddie's face into something resembling a gory horror poster.

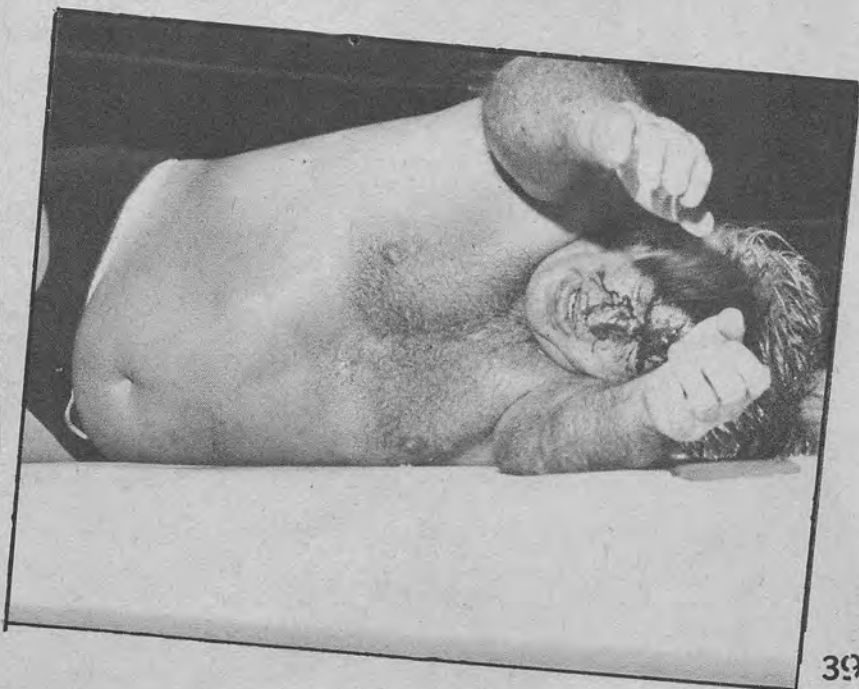
AM'S LUCK RAN OUT!



So weak from loss of blood and a terrible beating, Eddie Graham (above) can barely stand. Finally, after a few more blows from Colt, Eddie topples to the canvas (right). That ended his ideas of revenge.



"He talked so big, didn't he," said a gloating Buddy Colt (above) after demolishing Graham. "I guess now he'll send his little boy to get revenge for him!"



ARE THE "VAMPIRES" TAKING OVER WRESTLING?

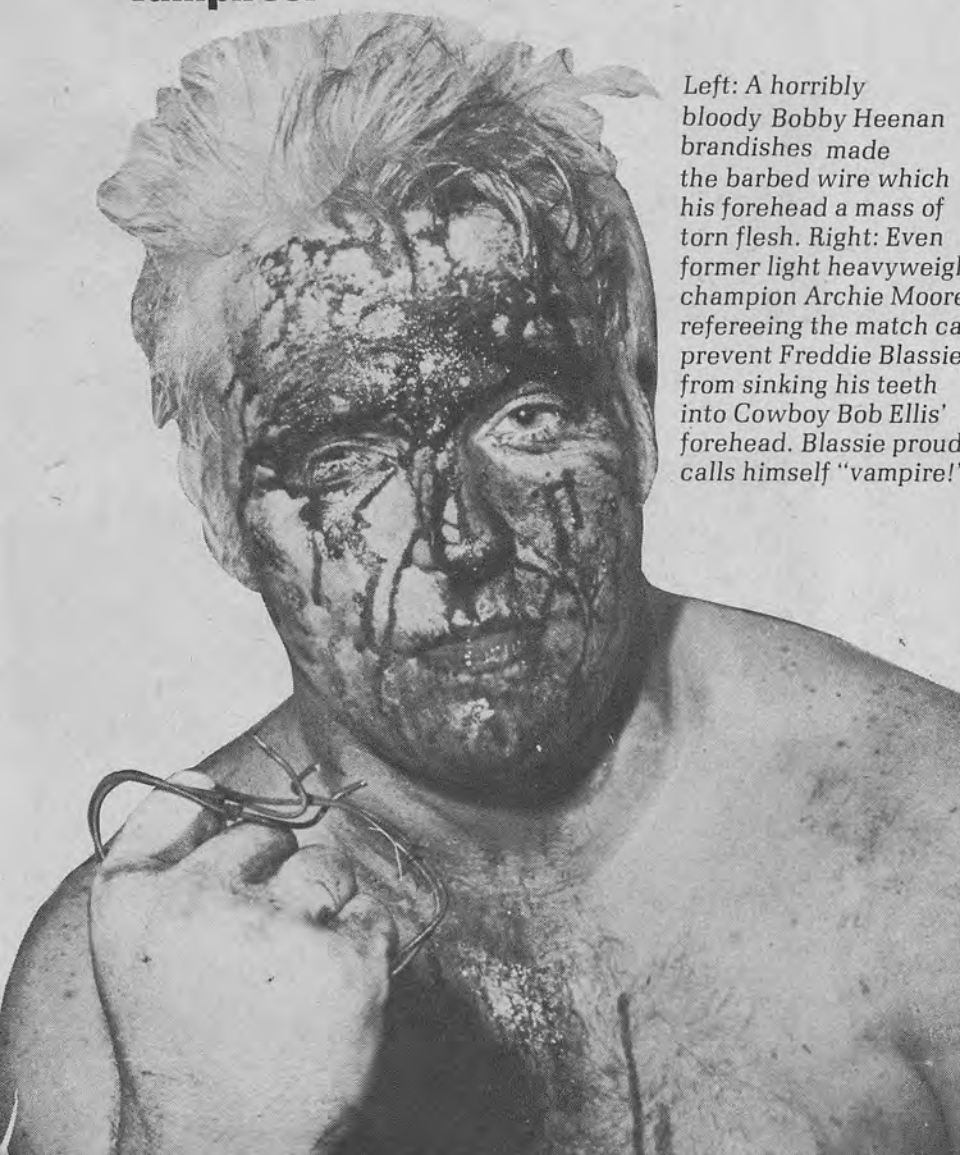
Blood is flowing like water and the men responsible go unpunished! Wrestling is falling prey to a new breed of cutthroats—the vampires!

Left: A horribly bloody Bobby Heenan brandishes the barbed wire which he has made his forehead a mass of torn flesh. Right: Even former light heavyweight champion Archie Moore refereeing the match can't prevent Freddie Blassie from sinking his teeth into Cowboy Bob Ellis' forehead. Blassie proudly calls himself "vampire!"

FEW SIGHTS IN wrestling are more horrifying than watching a man sink his teeth into an opponent's forehead. The blood begins to pour from the wound, covering the victim's face in a scarlet mask.

Often, screams of agony echo throughout the arena. A professional athlete has once again been reduced to a terrified man.

This is happening with more and more frequency in matches all over the country. Wrestlers who are known as "vampires," are responsible for more and more matches being ended because their victims are too badly bloodied to continue.



Watching a bleeding man stagger helplessly across the canvas as he strains it with his blood is an experience many horrified fans have shared.

Referees have proven incapable of stopping this primitive blood-letting. Wrestlers can twist away from the referee's gaze and sink their fangs into their helpless opponents. By the time the referee can intervene, the bloody deed is done.

These men, whose numbers seem to be continually growing, can be found in every area. No commission sees the need so far to ban them or even take extraordinary

measures. The "vampires" wreak their bloody havoc with little interference.

One man who has been nicknamed "vampire" for his bloody biting is Freddie Blassie. This veteran proudly brags about his ability to tear flesh from the foreheads of opponents. Blassie is happiest when his mouth is stained by someone else's blood.

"I've got teeth," Blassie declares, "so why not use them? Animals who constantly battle for survival know teeth are the best weapon. For people not to use what is available to them is stupid. And Freddie Blassie is not stupid!

"My opponents never know what happens. They just feel the warm blood pour over their faces. The referees can't stop me, the commissions can't stop me, other wrestlers can't stop me, I am INVINCIBLE!"

Being called a "vampire" doesn't bother Blassie. In fact, he claims to be proud of the nickname.

"Sure I'm a vampire. Call me that name anytime you want. All it does is scare my opponents even more! A wrestler doesn't get a nickname unless he's good enough to get others angry at him. A vampire is a fearsome creature. The very sound of its name is able to strike



fear into even the bravest man. The very sound of Freddie Blassie strikes the same kind of fear!"

Naturally, those wrestlers with the greatest reputations for leaving opponents in pools of blood are also the most accomplished biters. Sheik can tear a man's head to shreds of mangled flesh within seconds. His flashing teeth are as lethal as his plastic knife. Anyone who has seen Sheik biting an opponent must hope that some action can be taken to curb this savagery.

No wrestler who has earned a reputation for biting fears any kind

of official reprimand. Bobby Heenan will even talk about what he does to care for his teeth to make them the best weapons possible, a taunt to anyone who thinks this practice should be severely punished.

"I have two ways I take care of my choppers," Heenan declares, "one for short range strength... and one that will keep them strong for years to come. Yep, I'll be biting wrestlers when I'm 85 years old."

"First off, I never eat any candy or that stuff. It rots your teeth. I eat all my meat raw. I also eat fresh

vegetables and about four carrots a day. If it's good enough for rabbits, it's got to be good enough for me.

"Secondly, I'll brush my teeth four times a day with three different kinds of toothpaste. Then, for hours at a time, I'll bite into a plank of wood. My teeth are now strong enough to pull a Mack truck three miles. And you know what kind of job it does on an opponent!"

Heenan shares the confidence of other "vampires" that biting can never be banned successfully. Bobby Duncum relates how he bites and avoids the referee's gaze.

"It's really quite simple," Duncum admits, "which is why it's so effective. All you have to is turn your opponent's head away from the referee! Your body blocks the referee's view and he has to run around to see what's going on."

"By the time he can see what's happening and do something about it, the victim is bleeding like a stuffed pig! With a little practice, anyone can get up to 15 seconds of biting before the referee can interfere. And in 15 seconds, a guy can get slashed to ribbons!"

Can a wrestler be proud of horribly bloodying an opponent?

"I'm proud of winning," Duncum responds evenly. "How I win doesn't matter. All that matters is that I win."

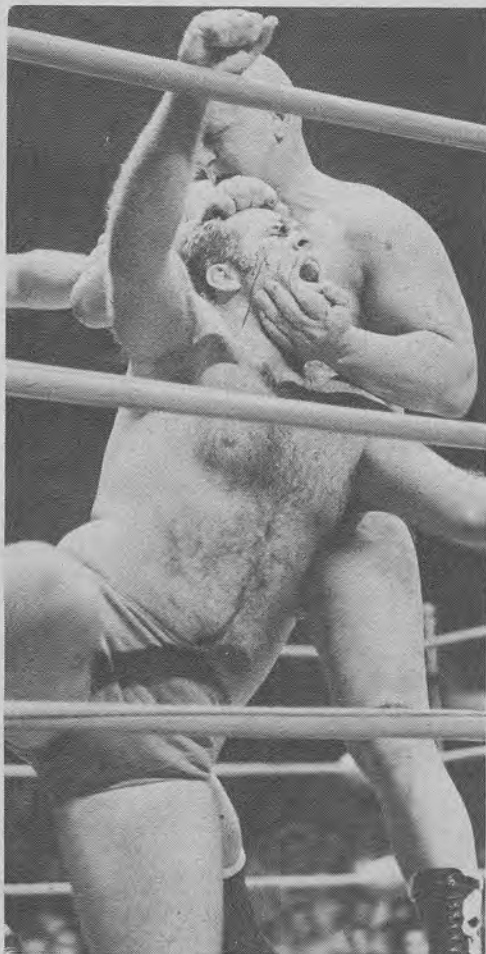
(Continued on page 50)



Above: Freddie Blassie's razor sharp teeth slash away at the flesh of Buddy Austin. If Blassie is in the match, chances are blood will flow! Right: Even Abdullah the Butcher can't escape being the bloody victim of Tor Kamata, using Oriental methods to cut his opponent to ribbons. Below: Bobby Duncum, a man who always proudly declares his love of seeing blood flow, savages Terry Funk until the Texan is gushing blood!



FLASHBACK SPECIAL!



Murphy seemed to get pleasure torturing me (above). A fan (below) revived me after I had blacked out.



Don Savage Remembers:

"THE NIGHT I SAW THE FACE OF DEATH!"



The late Skull Murphy nearly killed Don Savage. But a year after that beating, when Don read about Skull's tragic death, he could feel only one emotion. Sadness. Deep sadness By DON SAVAGE

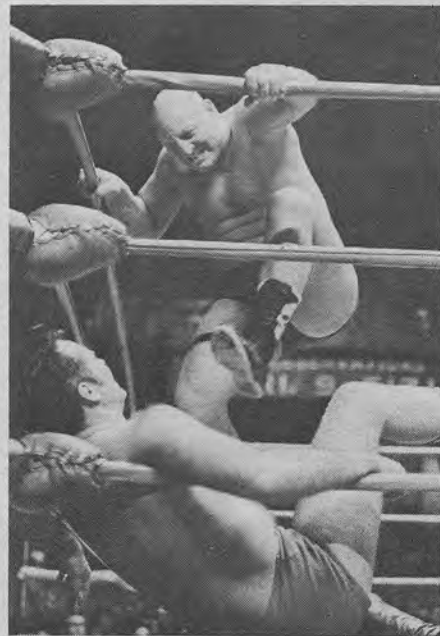
I WAS SITTING in my dining room having my morning coffee when the article in the newspaper caught my eye. It wasn't a big article, just a paragraph or two. But as I read it I began to shudder. Then a feeling of extreme sadness overcame me:

"Skull Murphy, professional wrestler, was found dead at his home last night," it began. "The apparent cause of death," it continued, "was a heart attack."

I felt like crying. I really did. Even though exactly one year prior to that morning that same man—Skull Murphy—nearly killed me!

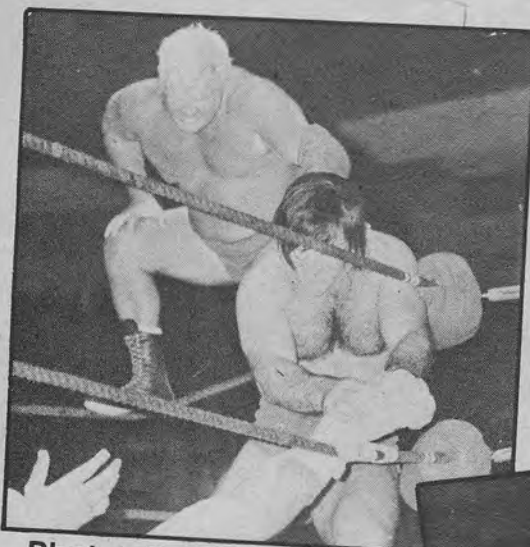
If my reaction upon seeing the news of Murphy's death seems strange to you it's understandable. But I wasn't the only man in the wrestling business to shed a tear when Skull passed away.

Forget about what he did once he climbed through those ropes. Yes, he was a ruthless madman, a sadistic, powerful individual who'd do



Skull's got me trapped in the corner and he's kicking away to his hearts content. The referee couldn't stop him.

(Continued on page 56)



Photos By Gary Mancuso
Gary Kamensack

Taking careful aim while Bruno Sammartino holds Ernie Ladd's leg (above) Bruiser prepares to come crashing down with all his weight on Ladd's knee. With a crazed look on his face (right) he dives off the rope as Bruno keeps Ladd's leg steadily on the ropes. "I was ready to explode all my hate on Ladd at once," Bruiser later recalled. "I have no regrets about what I did!"

BIG ERNIE LADD, all six feet nine inches and 325 pounds of him, whimpered in pain as officials crowded around him.

Big Ernie Ladd, tough guy, ex-football player, was lying on the ground outside the ring holding his leg.

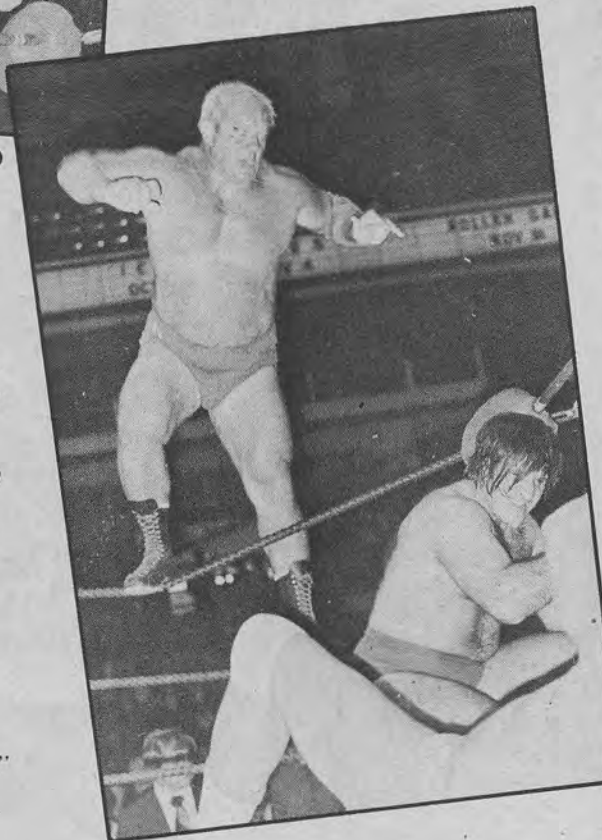
Big Ernie Ladd, the man who loves to intimidate smaller men, who has been known to enjoy being ruthless and to enjoy inflicting pain on his fellow wrestlers, was actually crying.

And watching this scene with smiles across their faces, Bruno Sammartino and Bruiser congratulated each other. "At last," Bruiser grinned, "that big stiff finally got what he's had coming to him."

Whether it was coming to him or not, what Ladd wound up with was a broken leg which will keep him out of action for at least six weeks!

"I've been waiting to do this for a long time," said Bruiser afterwards. "And if you're gonna ask me if I feel bad about it the answer is 'No.' Absolutely not! Was it an accident? No. I wanted to break his leg and I did."

Bruiser revealed that Ladd had been having leg problems. It seems that many of his opponents have been working on his right knee, known as a Ladd weak spot because of old football injuries.



REVENGE! BRUISER BREAKS ERNIE LADD'S

Sequence photos (above and right) show how Bruiser busted Ernie's leg, hospitalizing him for weeks.

When a Broadway star goes out on stage in a new play his friends often tell him to "break a leg." Unfortunately for Ernie Ladd, Bruiser and Bruno Sammartino took this advice literally!

"Ladd is powerful, very strong," explained Bruiser. "But he is vulnerable in his knees, as many former football players are. More and more wrestlers have been realizing this and taking advantage of it."

Bruiser said he realized how bad Ladd's leg was early in the match when he began working on Ernie's bandaged right knee. "The more I worked on it the more he limped."

Ladd has long worn heavy support bandages on his knees. So Bruiser got the bright idea that if he ripped the support bandage off Ladd's right knee the big man would lose his mobility.

Bruiser was right. Once the bandage was nearly ripped off, the

weakened Ladd wasn't even able to tag his partner, Baron Von Raschke.

Using fast tags, Bruiser and Bruno kept Ladd on the mat with a series of stepover toeholds and leglocks. Unable to get away, Ladd rolled under the bottom rope, onto the apron, and dropped onto the floor outside the ring. He obviously figured this would protect him. He obviously figured wrong.

While Bruno kept Von Raschke busy, Bruiser speeded to where Ladd was and began unwrapping the protective bandage from Ernie's right

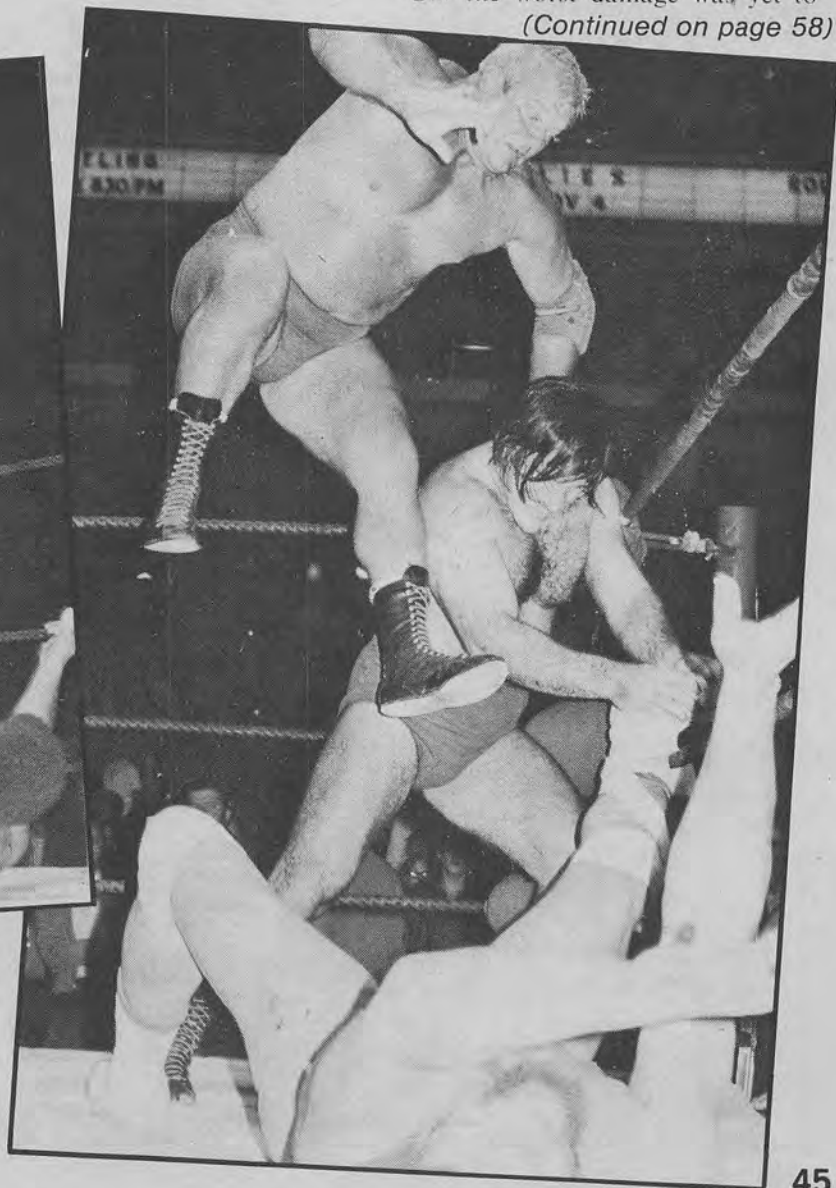
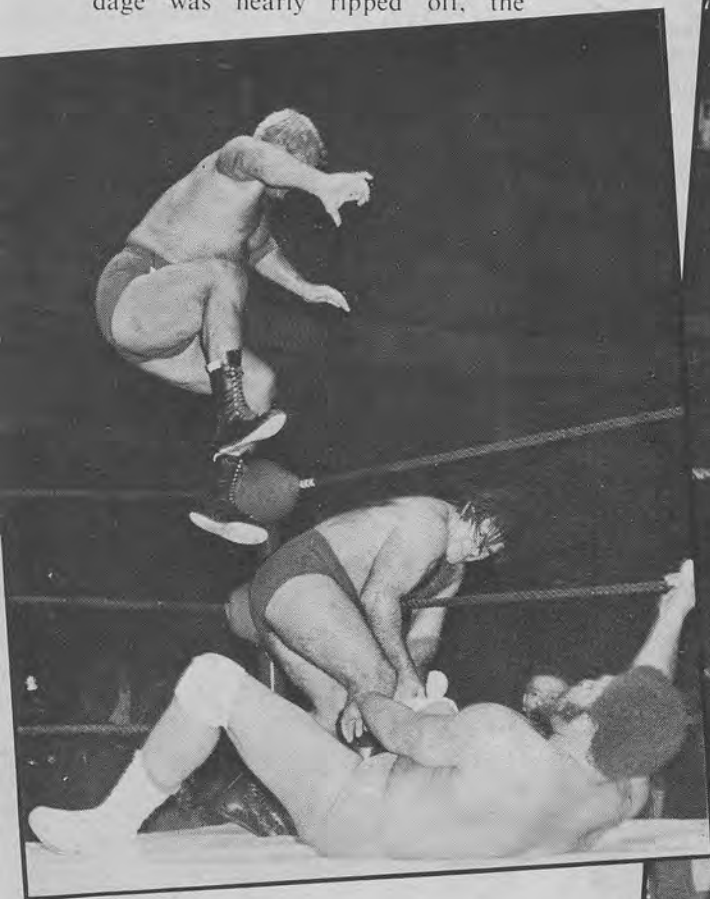
knee. The referee intervened before Bruiser could get the bandage off entirely, but he'd untied it enough to further weaken the already weak knee.

Ladd pulled himself back into the ring and tried to crawl over to tag Von Raschke. He didn't make it. Bruiser, using the dangling bandage, wrapped Ladd's leg in the rope and began kicking it. Bruiser was like a man possessed by demons. Despite warnings from the referee he continued working on the knee. And working on it. And working on it.

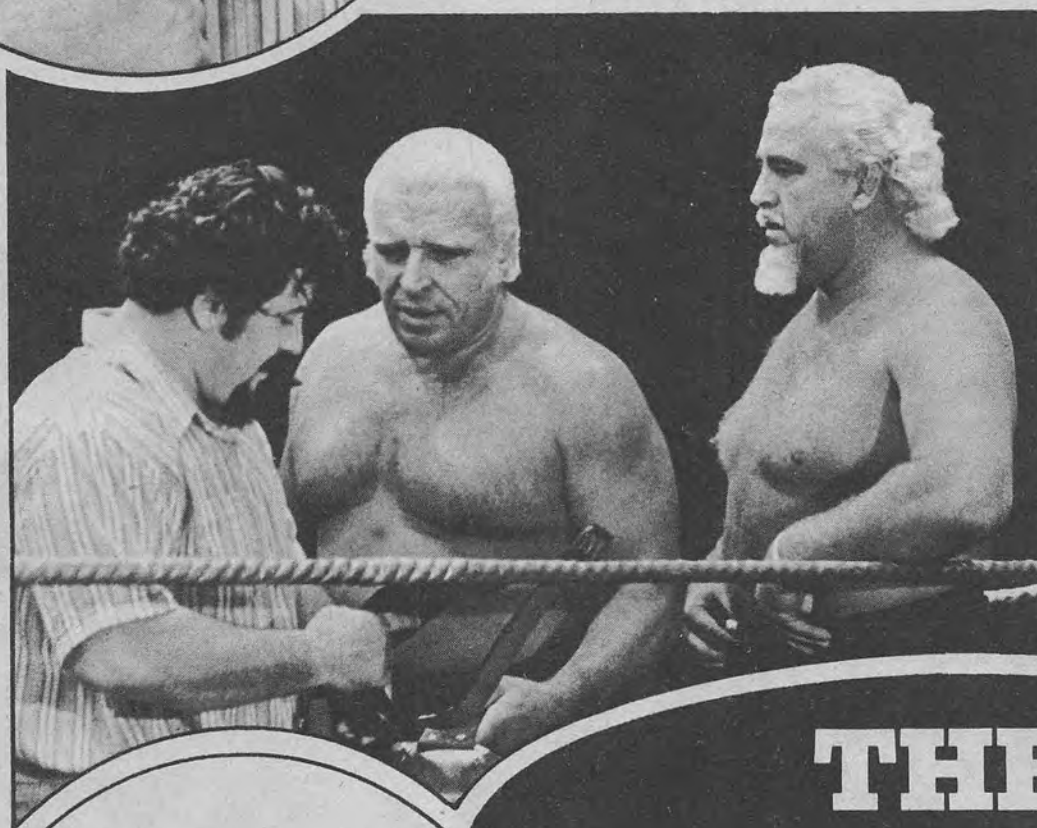
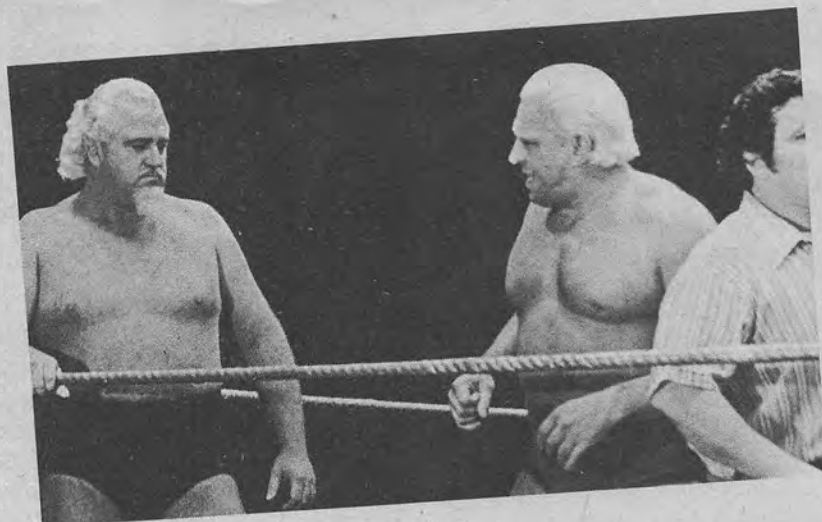
The referee finally pulled him off.

But the worst damage was yet to

(Continued on page 58)



LEG!



Lou Albano (above, left), manager of the champions, has a determined expression on his face as he gives them last-minute instructions. Left: After strategy session, Lou helps Luke (with beard) and Tarzan with their belts. But as soon as he turns his back (above), Graham and Tyler glare at each other and begin arguing—as usual.

**LUKE
GRAHAM
AND
TARZAN
TYLER**

**THE
TAG TEAM
THAT
HATE**

LOU ALBANO SAT on a wooden bench in a Madison Square Garden dressing room. His head was hanging down, face buried in his hands.

"Why?" he mumbled. "Why did it have to happen to me? Of all the crazy things I've seen—this is the craziest!"

What could make one of the world's most cunning and sought-after wrestling managers put his head in his hands and moan?

Lou Albano should be sitting on top of the world. A man whose career as a manager leaves little to be desired, Albano has known nothing but success after success.

It was he who masterminded Ivan Koloff's incredible upset victory over Bruno Sammartino that won the Heavyweight Championship of the World for Koloff.

It was he who was the brains behind the Fabulous Mongols, who, under his leadership, successfully defended their International Tag-Team Championship.

It was he who took Tarzan Tyler and Luke Graham, matched them together, and guided them to the W.W.W.F. World Tag-Team Championship.

Yet this man, who in the space of a year has had a world champion, a world champion tag-team title and an international tag-team title, sat in the dressing room, head in hands.

The root of his problem?

"My tag-team champions," he cried. "Tyler and Graham. They hated each other's guts. They spent more time trying to tear each other apart than trying to defeat their opponents! It was enough to make a manager cry!"



Luke Graham (left) and Tarzan Tyler raise their arms in victory pose after retaining their belts. Most teams pat each other's back or hold up the other's arm after a win. These two don't even look at each other!

To understand why "Crazy" Luke Graham and Tarzan Tyler were trying to kill each other it is necessary to go back to August, 1970 when Graham, Tyler and a dozen other wrestlers were booked for a tour of Japan. Lou Albano also went along to serve as referee and also to scout some new talent.

"Little did I know the new talent I was searching for was right under my nose," Albano remembers. "But I might as well start at the beginning.

"The day after we arrived in Japan I went to a local gym to do some weight lifting. When I walked through the door, I saw a mob of about 50 people standing in a circle, watching something inside the circle.

I looked at the faces of the people and figured it must be one hell of a demonstration. Their mouths were hanging open in awe and every eye was riveted to whatever they were watching.

"I managed to push my way through the crowd, and when I got to the front, I saw Tyler and Graham. They were tossing what looked like a 50-pound medicine ball back and forth like it was a ping-pong ball!

"The crowd was amazed at this demonstration. I had never seen these two working together before and immediately my brilliant manager's intuition took over. 'If they're this impressive in a dingy gym,' I said to myself, 'imagine what they'd

Lou Albano has a long record of success as a manager—and he has the ulcers to prove it. In this funny yet sad interview, Albano explains why he often takes more abuse than his own wrestlers

EACH OTHER'S GUTS

be like in an arena with thousands of people watching them!"

"They kept working with that medicine ball for over an hour. And all that time I was thinking about how I would promote them as a team. They'd be absolutely great together. I couldn't wait for them to finish so I could discuss it with them. When the crowd broke up, I ran over to them and explained what I had in mind as we walked back to the dressing room."

When Albano explained his proposition—he got the surprise of his life.

"Team us up?" Luke shouted. "No chance! We want to wrestle *against* one another—not *alongside* one another!"

"I couldn't believe my ears," Albano recalled. "Why would these two guys—men whose partnership would be a natural—want to wrestle one another?"

"Because we want to settle, once and for all, which one is the better wrestler," was Luke's answer. "That's why we came to Japan. No promoter in the States would sign the match. They felt it would be too gory for American fans."

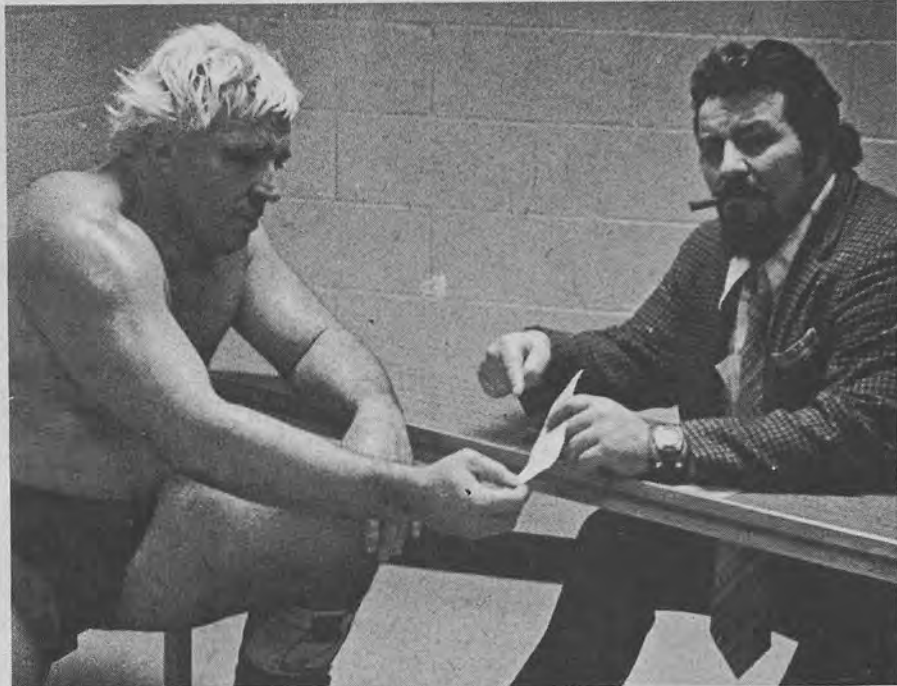
After they finished dressing, Albano walked Tyler and Graham back to the hotel, still trying to convince

them not to go through with their planned battle. But it was no use. They simply wouldn't listen. And to make matters worse, it was Albano who'd have to referee this brawl.

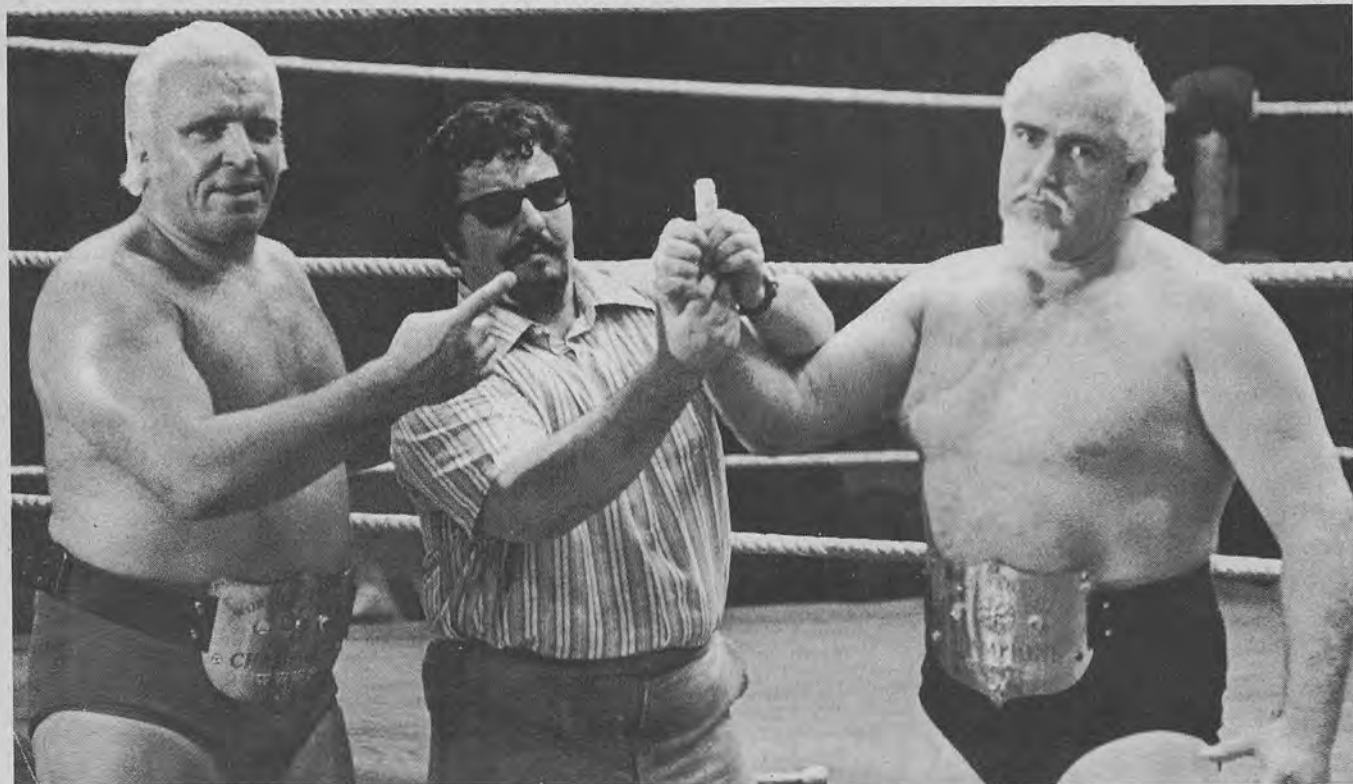
"The next evening I went to the arena and I was sick," Albano said.

"It was packed—15,000 people. At 8:30 I walked into the ring. The preliminary matches had flown by and I was now waiting for the main event—and the moment I dreaded—Tarzan Tyler vs. Luke Graham.

"They came into the ring and we



Lou Albano hands Tarzan Tyler a check after Tarzan recently won a Battle Royal. Where was Luke? Albano refuses to let either one enter a Battle Royal if the other is in it. "If I do they'll try to murder each other, they'll both lose and I lose purse money," Lou explains.



Luke seems to be asking for sympathy as Albano shows TV cameras the finger Luke broke during a recent match. But look at Tyler—he seems to think it's funny and hardly appears sympathetic to Luke's plight. Tarzan later joked that Luke broke the finger when he bit himself while eating.



Albano lets them work off their dislike for each other with arm wrestling. "You won't believe what I invent to keep them off each other's backs," says Lou.

gathered in the middle. I went over the rule book with them. They shook hands and went back to their corners. The bell sounded. I didn't want to look.

"Graham and Tyler sized each other up for a few moments before either made a move. Tarzan got the early advantage by slamming Luke to the mat and securing a painful armlock. But Luke, being the great wrestler he is, was able to get out of it by reversing the hold. Now it was Tyler who grimaced in pain. 'Please,' I remember thinking to myself, 'don't hurt each other. Just get this stupid match out of your system and I've got a world champion tag-team on my hands.'

"After 10 minutes of beautiful, scientific wrestling, one of them—I won't say who—threw a punch. I warned him to open his hand but he kept on punching. So the other guy started punching. Soon they were going at it Texas style. What I was praying not to happen—happened. They started kicking each other and gouging and clawing. Things were getting out of hand. But I had no reason to stop it!

"Suddenly, Luke opened a cut on Tarzan's head. Tyler was bleeding—badly. But he was roaring mad. And he wasted no time in grabbing Luke by the hair and ramming his face into the iron ringpost. Luke's head was split wide open!

"It was a bloodbath and I just

couldn't take it any more. If they killed each other there wouldn't be anything left for me to manage. I signalled the timekeeper to ring the bell. Then, with the help of a Japanese referee, I managed to drag them apart."

But Albano's troubles weren't over yet.

"Who won?" Luke screamed from his corner.

"I don't know!" Tyler roared back.

The ring announcer got the verdict from Albano. The audience was deathly quiet as it, as well as Tyler and Graham, waited for the announcement.

"Referee Lou Albano stops the match at 12:45 because of excessive bleeding. The match is ruled a draw!"

"I thought both Tyler and Graham were going to kill me," Lou said, shaking his head. "They began to come toward me slowly—one from each corner—and they still had blood on their hands.

"Okay Albano!" Tyler roared at me. 'We'll see you in the dressing room!'

"Tyler and Graham left and I followed, slowly and hesitantly. When I walked in there I got the shock of my life. Graham and Tyler were shaking hands and patting each other on the back! Each one was telling the other what a helluva great wrestler the other one was!

"Albano, you were right,' Luke told me. 'We shouldn't be beating each other's brains out. We should be beating other guys' brains out.' They laughed. And greatly relieved—I joined in."

Graham and Tyler and Albano

then all went out to a Japanese Restaurant, and somewhere between the sukiyaki and the tempura, Lou had their signatures on the contract he brought along.

"All this happened almost two years ago," said Lou. "The rest is history. Tyler and Graham became the greatest team ever to hit the east. They terrorized the opposition. Nobody could come close. I was a happy man.

"Then, a week ago, I walked into the dressing room and they were going at it tooth and nail. They had started the whole thing all over again—you know, that business about who was the better wrestler—and they were trying to kill each other!

"Stop! Stop!" I screamed. 'What are you guys trying to do—drive me into an asylum?'

They told Albano they wanted to wrestle each other again. Poor Lou was right back where he started. So far, he has kept them together—but he doesn't know how long he can stall off the inevitable.

"Yeah, I'll stay teamed up with Tyler," Graham said. "We're making too much money together to split up. And I wouldn't want to hurt Lou."

"That goes double for me," said Tyler. "Out of respect for Lou and because we signed a contract I'll stay with Graham."

"See what I mean?" Albano wailed. "A million dollars we could make together. I've got the two greatest wrestlers in the world. As a team they're unbeatable. It's just my luck they don't get along."

Ever wonder why wrestling managers get ulcers? □

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"VAMPIRES"

(Continued from Page 42)



Above: Abdullah the Butcher may be soaked in blood but his opponent is not only bloody—but unconscious! Right: Few men have made more men bleed than Sheik, though his own warm ooze covering his forehead must seem like second nature to the crazed Arab. Below: Buddy Colt and Eddie Graham gush blood in a recent savage encounter in Georgia.



Most of the other "vampires" echo this sentiment. All they care about is winning, winning with a bloodlust. The condition of their opponents after a victory is meaningless. Yet, there are other ways of winning besides cutting up a human being beyond recognition.



"I dig watching guys bleed!" Buddy Colt admits openly. "So do the other 'vampires,' though they may not admit it. When their own blood comes pouring into their eyes, it scares the hell out of those guys. I've seen 250-pound wrestlers reduced to terrified babies because they were blinded by blood. They feel the warm ooze and everything goes dark.

"Watch their faces, those scared stiff expressions. Best sight I've ever seen in wrestling. I'd wrestle for nothing if I could just be assured to see the guys gushing blood. Think, I get that and a lot of money too! It's the best of all possible worlds!"

Colt is correct. Anyone who has seen the "vampires" in action knows these guys enjoy watching an opponent bleed. Men like Killer Kowalski, Abdullah the Butcher, Ray Stevens, George "The Animal" Steele, Killer Brooks, Ox Baker, and the Legionnaires get some weird thrill from watching another human being gush blood. And no one seems able to stop them.

So far, no commission has even proposed a plan to stop these "vampires" from wreaking their bloody havoc? How much longer before events make such proposals necessary? And what tragic event will spur these commissions to action?

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DOES ANYBODY WANT TO MARRY IGOR?

(Continued from Page 21)

Igor reads about his favorite wrestler (himself) in his favorite magazine *THE WRESTLER*. When he's not reading or wrestling, Igor's favorite hobby is girls and food.

"Igor wrestles five or six nights a week and wherever he goes he meets new girls," Ivan said. "He falls in love with five girls a week. But because of his traveling, he rarely gets to see the same girls too often. I'm just hoping that he gets attached to one girl and they don't want me around. That would be wonderful!"

Igor often tries to date the girls who come to watch him wrestle. He doesn't see any reason not to.

"If a girl comes to see me wrestle, I don't see why I shouldn't date her if I want to," he said. But then he paused to scratch his head. "They do turn me down a lot though. Sometimes they look at me as though I were a nut. Maybe it's the way I dress, huh?"

Maybe it is the way you dress, Igor.

Igor dresses different from anyone you've ever seen. On his head invariably sits a Polish workman's cap. He wears a bright red and yellow shirt that covers him to the waist. And to top it off, he's got the wildest pair of trunks ever. It looks like he simply tore a pair of pants in half and wore the top half!

"Maybe it does look kind of strange," he admitted. "But I really love wild-colored clothes." A big grin crossed his face and he put his index finger up to his temple to show us he had an idea. "I'd like to have a wrestler's fashion show one night. It could be a contest. I'm sure I'd win the award for the hippest-dressed wrestler in the world. Clothes really turn me on!"

Some fans don't exactly agree with Igor's description of himself as "hip."

"Him? Hip? You're kidding!" insisted one Toronto miss. "He looks like he scavenged his clothes out of a city dump. But he is cute in a cuddly kind of way. He isn't, however, what you'd call hip."

Igor gets turned on by girls—but do girls get turned on by Igor?



"I think he's the sexiest man in the world," said one 25-year-old blushing blonde. "Every time I see Igor I just want to reach out and rub his cute belly!"

"You ought to have your eyes checked," laughed another young lady who said she was 22. "He's fat, the beard makes him look like an ape and he always walks around with that dumb smile on his face. He's about as sexy as a head of lettuce!"

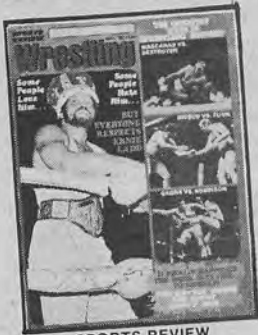
"I think he's sort of cute, you know, in a weird sort of way," added a third young lady. "He's so innocent and he has a baby face. He looks like he'd never hurt anybody. But he is too fat and too short and not at all sexy. I like him—but I wouldn't want to marry him."

And that, friends, is Kalmikoff's problem.

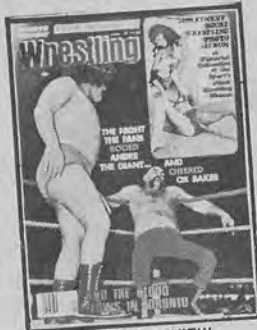
"Everybody loves him," Ivan says sorrowfully, "but nobody wants to marry him. Sooner or later it has got to happen. He'll meet a nice girl who speaks Polish and I hope, I pray, she'll fall in love with him. I don't mind being a manager. I enjoy it. But I just wasn't cut out to be a chaperone!"

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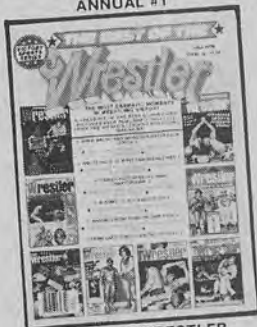
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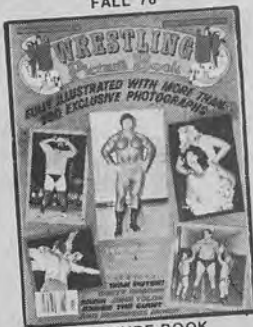
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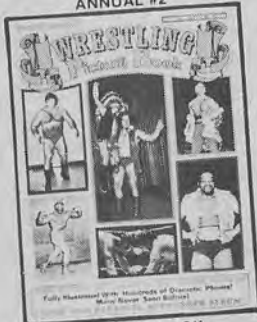
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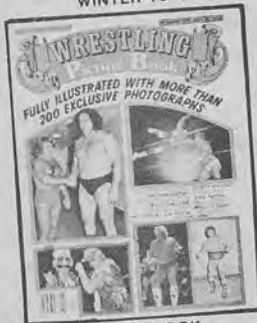
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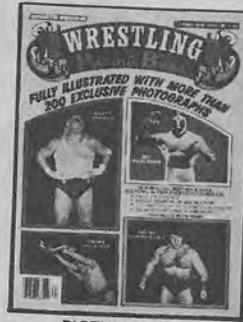
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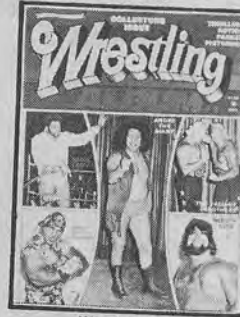
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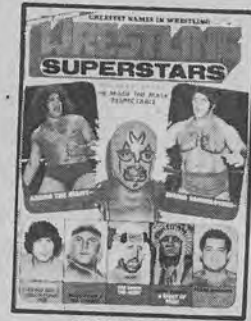
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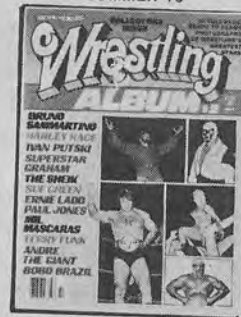
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INTRODUCTION

(Continued from Page 6)



OCTOBER 1973



DECEMBER 1973



MARCH 1974



JULY 1974

There Want to Marry Igor?" deals with the difficulties of being a chaperone for a romantic young man with a language problem. Though the story first appeared in the February 1972 issue, it looks like the offer is still open.

From the humorous to the shocking, we come to **"I'm Sorry I Didn't Kill Terry Funk!"** it's an astonishing account of Pak Song's brutalizing confrontation against Funk. When the chain match was over, Song really wanted Funk in a coffin, as this story first printed in March of 1971 proves.

Everyone who wonders about the complex personalities of Freddie Blassie and John Tolos, and that includes just about everybody, will want to read **"Why Tolos Blinded Me!"** Freddie Blassie's exclusive interview after Tolos threw toxic

Monsel's powder in his eyes makes as startling reading now as it did back in November 1971, when this article sent shock waves throughout wrestling.

One of the most remarkable showdowns ever seen in THE WRESTLER was **"Claw vs. Abdominal Stretch,"** pitting Baron Von Raschke's clawhold against Wilbur Snyder's renown abdominal stretch. This story appeared in July of 1974 and remains one of the classic instances of warring battlers at their best.

When it comes to the best, few wrestlers can be mentioned in the same breath as Pedro Morales and Bruno Sammartino. In **"Sammartino Challenges Morales,"** we learned of the tensions and disagreements which led to their awesome confrontation in Shea Stadium in September of 1972.

This article appeared in December of 1971, preparing readers of THE WRESTLER for the battle. Today, it's a fascinating glimpse at two strong personalities headed in a collision course.

We can be sure one wrestler wished we didn't include **"The Night Eddie Graham's Luck Ran Out!"** and that man is Eddie Graham. Eddie would sooner let this beating at the hands of Buddy Colt lie forgotten. Eddie even refused to read it when the article appeared in April of 1973!

"Are the 'Vampires' Taking Over Wrestling?" is a question that must still be answered. This study, appearing in April 1975, remains the definitive article on the subject of wrestlers who long to see opponent's blood.

Anyone who has read or heard about **"The Night I Saw the Face of Death"** will be delighted it is included in this collection. Don Savage's brutalization at the hands of Skull Murphy can still send chills up the reader's spine, even though it first appeared in December 1973 as a "Flashback Special."

It took Bruno Sammartino's help before **"Revenge! Bruiser Breaks Ernie Ladd's Leg!"** could occur. It's a thrilling account of the worst night in Ernie Ladd's life. No one who saw the match will ever forget, nor will anyone who read it originally in March 1974. Many requested this article appear as soon as possible in the BEST OF WRESTLER series.

If you're confused by the title, **"The Tag Team That Hate Each Other's Guts,"** wait until you read the story! It tells of tag team champs Luke Graham and Tarzan Tyler. Reading about this pair set heads shaking all over wrestling in March 1972; chances are it will do it again this year!

This is the best of the best, printed due to the many pleas from fans all over the world. It's a service we're happy to perform!

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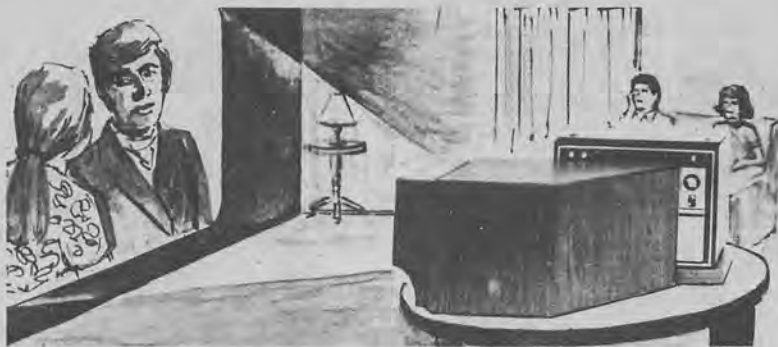
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FACE OF DEATH (Continued from Page 43)



He almost busted my neck (above). I was burning with hate for Murphy throughout the entire match. Dr. Bernhart Schwartz was called in when I blacked out a second time (left).

anything to win. But once the match was over he was a sweet, gentle, soft-spoken fellow who had, believe it or not, few enemies.

Yet it was while wrestling Skull Murphy that I saw the face of death!

I'm not ashamed to say it. Murphy gave me the worst beating I ever received. Ever. I was covered with blood. My own. Every muscle in my body felt as if it had been ripped to shreds. I was being worked over ruthlessly. I prayed for the match to end. I believed I was going to die.

To this day I don't remember how it ended. They say I passed out. All I remember was waking up in a hospital the following day. The nurse handed me a card. "A friend of yours was here to see you this morning," she told me. "He was a bald man. He asked me to give this to you."

I opened the card—a get well card—and read the inscription. "Sorry for the trip to the hospital," it said. "Hope you're better soon. You're a good man." It was signed "Skull Murphy."

I never saw Skull Murphy again after that. But I was told that what

he'd done was not unusual. Another wrestler told me that Skull was so competitive when he wrestled he'd actually turn into a wild man. But deep down he never wanted to hurt anybody and if he did he felt badly about it.

I remembered how he stomped me and clawed me and kicked and bit me and how he turned my face into a gory mess. I thought I'd always hate him. Never before and not since have I been as terrified as those minutes spent wrestling Skull Murphy. To this day I still have nightmares about that match.

But a year later, when I read about his death, I couldn't help feeling sad. Here was a man who nearly killed me. But now it was he who was dead.

What surprised me about the article was the apparent cause of death. Heart attack. If that was true it could have been for only one reason—that his heart was too big. And despite the terrible beating he gave me, I'll always feel badly that I never got the chance to talk to him afterwards. I've got a hunch we could've become friends. □

A ROOKIE

(Continued from Page 18)



Scott became more and more relaxed as the match progressed. Here he applies pressure on an armlock.

"I dropkicked him, and when he got up I dropkicked him again. Then I kneedropped him. I used a flying headscissors. He was dazed! But I just kept going!

"After that, the match moved swiftly. I can't remember all the moves. There were good holds by both parties. But one thing I'm sure of. By then I had forgotten about my nervousness. I wasn't thinking about all the fans watching me in my first main event. I was just concentrating on wrestling York. That's all that was on my mind!

"The match ended in a draw. But I was certain I did some damn good wrestling. I had proved what I could do, and the fans were cheering wildly. It was the greatest feeling!

"Afterwards, they came up and congratulated me. 'Damn great wrestling!' yelled one guy. 'Those dropkicks were too fast for me to keep up with, and I could imagine how it was for York!' screamed another. 'Let me shake your hand, champ!' shouted someone else.

"I felt good. Real good! I knew I did it, and could do it again!"

That's how it was for Scott Casey in his first main event. And though he was happy with his wrestling in that match, he'd be the first to admit that no matter how well you do in any match, every time you step into the arena it's another challenge and you've gotta prove yourself again!

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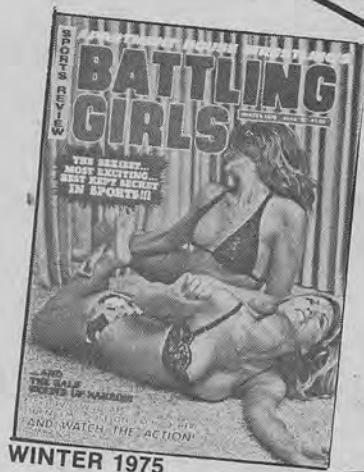
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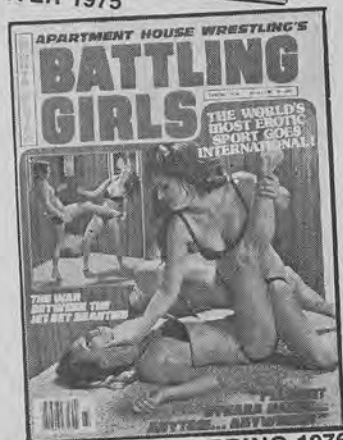
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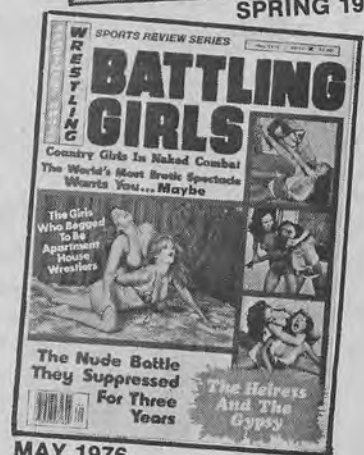
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REVENGE!

(Continued from Page 45)



Aggravating the situation, Bruiser unravels Ladd's knee brace (above) and kicks away at the knee. Then he drags big Ernie back into the ring and twists his leg repeatedly (right). Ladd screamed out in pain and Bruiser laughed all the while. "It was the most satisfying thing I've ever done," Bruiser admitted. "Ernie Ladd and every one of Bobby Heenan's crew are a menace to the sport and I vow to wipe them all out of wrestling for good."

come.

Von Raschke ran into the ring to try to save his partner. By doing this he diverted the referee's attention away from Ladd. It gave Bruiser and Bruno the opening they needed.

While the referee struggled with Von Raschke, trying to push him back into his corner, Bruno came into the ring and propped Ladd's injured leg up on the rope. Bruiser, meanwhile, climbed to the top rope.

Ladd's eyes opened wide in fear. "No! Don't!" he screamed.

Too late.

Bruiser came flying through the air, landing on the outstretched leg with a devastating flying kneedrop.

"Crack!"

Ladd screamed in terror as he felt the bones in his knee shatter.

Bruiser had gotten his revenge.



Ladd was carried on a stretcher to the ambulance which waits on call for just such emergencies. X-rays were taken at the hospital which revealed not only a broken knee, but torn cartilage throughout the kneecap. "His knee." Baron Von Raschke confided the following day after visiting Ernie in the hospital, "is a mess."

"I don't know how long I'll be out," Ladd said bitterly from his hospital bed. "They tell me I'll need an operation and therapy to build the knee back up. They told me I may lose some of my mobility. There's some cartilage that has to be removed. It doesn't look promising."



A job well done, Bruiser stands victorious (above) as the fans give him a standing ovation. Ladd vows revenge. "I'll break Bruiser and Sammartino's backs," he threatens. "They might as well pick out their coffins because they're dead men now," he added. Bruiser and Bruno agree they are not scared by Ladd's threat.

"But I'll guarantee one thing. You haven't seen the last of Ernie Ladd. It may take awhile but I'll be back. And when I do I'm goin' after Sammartino and that fat blond friend of his.

"And when I get them I ain't gonna break their legs. I'LL BREAK THEIR BACKS!!!"

Neither Bruno nor Bruiser seemed concerned with Ladd's threat. In fact, they laughed when told about it.

"Oh, I'm real terrified," chuckled Bruiser. "Yeah," added Sammartino. "We may not sleep for months."

"Look," Bruiser explained. "Ladd's been injuring guys for years now... usually guys smaller than him. Hell, he's given me a couple of bad nights too. But it always catches up with you. And this time Ladd got back what he's been dishin' out. He got that back — and maybe a little bit more." ☐

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CLAW VS. ABDOMINAL STRETCH

(Continued from Page 33)



Von Raschke tries to regain his senses after Wilbur put the stretch on full force. "I could almost hear his muscles ripping apart," Wilbur recalls. "Von Raschke deserves all the torture he receives."

smashed Von Raschke in the face. submit!

The blow landed solidly and gave Wilbur all the time he needed. He managed to clear his head and marshal all his strength for one attack. He knew one attack was all he was going to have.

First Snyder made a lunge for the Baron's left arm. A quick twist later and Von Raschke was on the ground. Snyder's body flew into position. Before the startled Von Raschke knew what happened he was in the abdominal stretch. Here was an excellent chance for him to prove how ineffective the hold was against him.

But this time the hold was very effective. Von Raschke had no chance of escaping. If he saw one he didn't take it. He was forced to

In the dressing room the Baron claimed that the result didn't mean a thing.

"It was luck," Von Raschke declared, "simply a case of him catching me when I was off-guard. I had him finished three or four times, but I let him up because I wanted to give the fans their money's worth. It's too bad Snyder doesn't care about the sport as much as I do."

Snyder, meanwhile, says he has learned his lesson.

"I'll never," Snyder promised, "let Von Raschke get his fingers on me again. If he had kept it up, he would have finished me. I think we both know now that either hold can end a match. It's just a matter of who is applying it."

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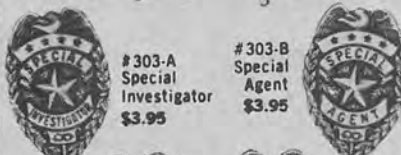
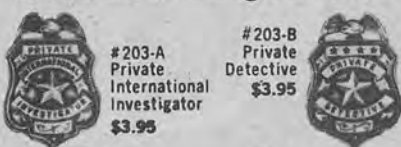
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THE NIGHT EDDIE GRAHAM'S LUCK RAN OUT!

(Continued from Page 39)

and more wrestlers are suffering disabling injuries. And every time it happens there is an appeal to enforce the rules. Then the incident is forgotten until the next time.

"Yes, that's the way it usually is," Graham agreed. "But this time someone's gonna remember. Buddy Colt is not going to forget what he did to Johnny. I can guarantee that."

Graham had a strange look in his eyes, the kind of look that usually means trouble for anyone who gets in his way. Usually a mild-mannered man, Graham can turn into an enraged avenger in a flash, as anybody who remembers his old days with brother Jerry at Madison Square Garden can testify.

Graham wanted Colt. And the best way to get a match against him was to issue a challenge for Buddy's Georgia State Championship. He issued that challenge and got the match.

"I don't care about the title," Eddie confessed. "It's the man—not the title—I want."

Colt seemed unconcerned.

"I've heard Graham mouth off

before," he stated. "He doesn't scare anybody—especially me. Walker mouthed off too. You saw what I did to him. When I finish with Graham it'll just mean another notch to carve in my belt, that's all."

The grudge match—from Eddie's viewpoint, anyway—was held in Macon, Georgia. And nobody in that town remembers a bloodier brawl. Before the match Colt received a telegram. It read as follows:

"Wishing you all the best tonight against that slob Graham. I hope you squash him like the insect he is." It was signed by Bobby Shane.

But not even Shane's good wishes could help Colt in the first fall. Graham dazzled him with a display of scientific wrestling Colt never expected. Afterwards, Colt would admit that Graham surprised him by coming out wrestling instead of slugging. It cost Buddy the first fall.

Graham put on a performance that could have been used to illustrate a textbook in that opening fall. He ripped into Colt with drop-kicks. He threw him through the



Colt drags Graham by the hair (right) at the start of the bloodbath. Eddie demanded the match to get revenge for what Colt did to popular Johnny "Rubberman" Walker (above). Colt ended Walker's long career.



air with snap mares. He stretched his ligaments to the breaking point with leglocks and armbars. And he finished off the fall with a reverse cradle that had Buddy wrapped up like yesterday's garbage.

But the second fall was a different story altogether. Instead of wrestling Colt as he did in the first fall, Graham lost patience with Buddy's dirty tactics and figured two could play the same game. However, some people play that game better than others, and few



It's the beginning of the end for Eddie Graham as Colt smashes his fist into Eddie's head starting a torrential flow of blood.

play it better than Buddy Colt.

The match deteriorated into a war and scientific wrestling was thrown out the window. Colt kicked ... Graham kicked back. Colt pulled hair ... Graham retaliated. Suddenly, Buddy grabbed Eddie's head and began punching. Swift, sharp, short shots tore into Graham's forehead. By the time the referee was able to pull Colt away, blood was streaming down Eddie's forehead.

Blinded by his own blood,

(Continued on page 64)

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## GRAHAM'S LUCK

(Continued on page 63)



Eddie catches Colt (above) in a reverse cradle to win the first fall. Had he stuck strictly to scientific grappling he might have won the match in two straight falls. But instead he played into Buddy's hands. By the end of the contest (right) Colt is throwing a bloody Eddie Graham around like a rag doll!



Graham couldn't even tell where Buddy was. He soon found out. Colt picked him up in a shoulder haul and crotch lift and held him in the air.

Smash! Graham was slammed into the mat by a vicious body slam. Then Colt again lifted him high into the air. But this time it was nothing as simple as a body slam. Instead of smashing Graham to the mat on his back, Buddy smashed him down so that the entire force of the blow was taken on Eddie's neck! He seemed to be out cold!

Graham was in no shape to start the third fall and why he was allowed to is still a mystery. But when the referee asked him if he wanted to throw in the towel, Eddie gritted his teeth and said "No." He was barely conscious.

The third fall was a slaughter. Graham fought back, mostly by instinct, and even succeeded in bloodying Colt's face. But how much of it was Buddy's blood and how much Eddie's (which was still flowing freely) could not be seen.

Colt kept pounding at the open

gash on Eddie's forehead and the blood kept coming until it covered Graham's whole body. After it was over, when they got Graham back to the dressing room, even his white sweatsocks were drenched with blood.

After awhile it just became sickening. Eddie could no longer put up any resistance. However, Colt persisted. And he didn't stop until he had gotten himself disqualified.

Graham was taken to the hospital for X-rays on his neck. He claimed he could not remember a thing after he'd been slammed head first into the canvas. However, preliminary hospital reports indicated there was no serious damage or broken bones. At first it was feared Graham might have fractured a vertebrae.



Almost blinded by blood dripping into his eyes, Graham is spun around as Colt connects with a roundhouse right to the jaw.

Colt, meanwhile, was gloating over what he termed "a masterful triumph."

"Oh, he talked so big, didn't he?" Buddy said. "He was going to get revenge for poor Johnny Walker. Big brave Eddie Graham. Hah! That's a laugh. I guess now he'll have to send his little boy here to get revenge for him!"

Colt didn't seem concerned about being disqualified. "Why should I?" he shot back. "I've still got my title and I wiped the mat up with Mr. Graham. Even though my hand wasn't held up at the end of the match there wasn't one person in the audience who didn't know who the winner was. I think it'll be a long time before Mr. Graham sets out to get revenge for anybody. A long, long time!" □

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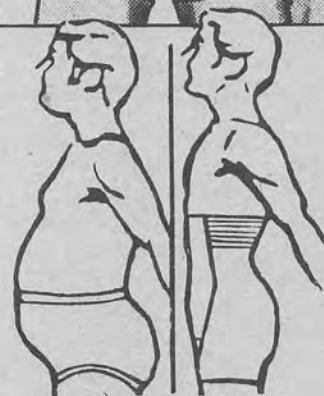
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